

QUEEN MAB  
A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM  
1813

TO HARRIET ———

WHOSE is the love that, gleaming through the world,  
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn ?

Whose is the warm and partial praise,  
Virtue's most sweet reward ?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul  
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow ?

Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,  
And loved mankind the more ?

HARRIET ! on thine :—thou wert my purer mind  
Thou wert the inspiration of my song ;

Thine are these early wilding flowers,  
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love ;  
And know, though time may change and years may roll,  
Each floweret gathered in my heart  
It consecrates to thine.

# POEMS OF SHELLEY

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## QUEEN MAB

### I

How wonderful is Death,  
Death and his brother Sleep !  
One, pale as yonder waning moon  
With lips of lurid blue ;  
The other, rosy as the morn  
When throned on ocean's wave  
It blushes o'er the world :  
Yet both so passing wonderful !

Hath then the gloomy Power  
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres  
Seized on her sinless soul ?  
Must then that peerless form  
Which love and admiration cannot view  
Without a beating heart, those azure veins  
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,  
That lovely outline, which is fair  
As breathing marble, perish ?  
Must putrefaction's breath  
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight  
But loathsomeness and ruin ?

Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,  
 On which the lightest heart might moralize ?  
 Or is it only a sweet slumber  
 Stealing o'er sensation,  
 Which the breath of roseate morning  
 Chaseth into darkness ?  
 Will Ianthe wake again,  
 And give that faithful bosom joy  
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch  
 Light, life and rapture from her smile ?

Yes ! she will wake again,  
 Although her glowing limbs are motionless,  
 And silent those sweet lips,  
 Once breathing eloquence  
 That might have soothed a tiger's rage  
 Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.  
 Her dewy eyes are closed,  
 And on their lids, whose texture fine  
 Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,  
 The baby Sleep is pillowed :  
 Her golden tresses shade  
 The bosom's stainless pride,  
 Curling like tendrils of the parasite  
 Around a marble column.

Hark ! whence that rushing sound ?  
 'Tis like the wondrous strain  
 That round a lonely ruin swells,  
 Which, wandering on the echoing shore,  
 The enthusiast hears at evening :  
 'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh ;  
 'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes  
 Of that strange lyre whose strings  
 The genii of the breezes sweep ;  
 Those lines of rainbow light  
 Are like the moonbeams when they fall



Through some cathedral window, but the tents  
Are such as may not find  
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen !  
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air :  
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,  
And stop obedient to the reins of light ;  
These the Queen of spells drew in,  
She spread a charm around the spot,  
And, leaning graceful from the ætherial car,  
Long did she gaze, and silently,  
Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh ! not the visioned poet in his dreams,  
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,  
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand  
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,  
When fancy at a glance combines  
The wondrous, and the beautiful,—  
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape  
Hath ever yet beheld,  
As that which reined the coursers of the air,  
And poured the magic of her gaze  
Upon the maiden's sleep.

The broad and yellow moon  
Shone dimly through her form—  
That form of faultless symmetry ;  
The pearly and pellucid car  
Moved not the moonlight's line :  
'Twas not an earthly pageant :  
Those who had looked upon the sight,  
Passing all human glory,  
Saw not the yellow moon,  
Saw not the mortal scene,  
Heard not the night-wind's rush,

Heard not an earthly sound, .  
Saw but the fairy pageant,  
Heard but the heavenly strains  
That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud,  
That catches but the palest tinge of even,  
And which the straining eye can hardly seize  
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,  
Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair star  
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,  
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,  
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,  
Spread a purpleal halo round the scene,  
Yet with an undulating motion,  
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car  
The Fairy Queen descended,  
And thrice she waved her wand  
Circled with wreaths of amaranth :  
Her thin and misty form  
Moved with the moving air,  
And the clear silver tones,  
As thus she spoke, were such  
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

#### FAIRY

Stars ! your balmy influence shed !  
Elements ! your wrath suspend !  
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds  
That circle thy domain !  
Let not a breath be seen to stir  
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,  
Let even the restless gossamer  
Sleep on the moveless air !

Soul of Ianthe! thou,  
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,  
That waits the good and the sincere ; that waits  
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will  
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,  
The icy chains of custom, and have shone  
The day-stars of their age ;—Soul of Ianthe !  
Awake ! arise !

Sudden arose  
Ianthe's Soul ; it stood  
All beautiful in naked purity,  
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.  
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,  
Each stain of earthliness  
Had passed away, it reassumed  
Its native dignity, and stood  
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay  
Wrapped in the depth of slumber :  
Its features were fixed and meaningless,  
Yet animal life was there,  
And every organ yet performed  
Its natural functions : 'twas a sight  
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.  
The self-same lineaments, the same  
Marks of identity were there :  
Yet, oh, how different ! One aspires to Heaven,  
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,  
And ever changing, ever rising still,  
Wantons in endless being.  
The other, for a time the unwilling sport  
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on ;  
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly :  
Then, like an useless and worn-out machine,  
Rots, perishes, and passes.

## FAIRY

Spirit ! who hast dived so deep ;  
 Spirit ! who hast soared so high ;  
 Thou the fearless, thou the mild,  
 Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,  
 Ascend the car with me.

## SPIRIT

Do I dream ? Is this new feeling  
 But a visioned ghost of slumber ?  
 If indeed I am a soul,  
 A free, a disembodied soul,  
 Speak again to me.

## FAIRY

I am the fairy MAB : to me 'tis given  
 The wonders of the human world to keep :  
 The secrets of the immeasurable past,  
 In the unfailing consciences of men,  
 Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find :  
 The future, from the causes which arise  
 In each event, I gather : not the sting  
 Which retributive memory implants  
 In the hard bosom of the selfish man ;  
 Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb  
 Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up  
 The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day  
 Are unforeseen, unregistered by me :  
 And it is yet permitted me to rend  
 The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit  
 Clothed in its changeless purity, may know  
 How soonest to accomplish the great end  
 For which it hath its being, and may taste  
 That peace which in the end all life will share.  
 This is the meed of virtue ; happy Soul,  
 Ascend the car with me !

The chains of earth's immurement  
Fell from Ianthe's spirit ;  
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw  
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.  
She knew her glorious change,  
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled  
New raptures opening round :  
Each day-dream of her mortal life,  
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers  
That closed each well-spent day,  
Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded ;  
The silver clouds parted ;  
And as the car of magic they ascended,  
Again the speechless music swelled,  
Again the coursers of the air  
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,  
Shaking the beamy reins,  
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.  
The night was fair, and countless stars  
Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—  
Just o'er the eastern wave  
Peeped the first faint smile of morn :—  
The magic car moved on—  
From the celestial hoofs  
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,  
And where the burning wheels  
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,  
Was traced a line of lightning.  
Now it flew far above a rock,  
The utmost verge of earth,  
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow  
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,  
Calm as a slumbering babe,  
Tremendous Ocean lay.  
The mirror of its stillness showed  
The pale and waning stars,  
The chariot's fiery track,  
And the grey light of morn  
Tinging those fleecy clouds  
That canopied the dawn.  
Seemed it, that the chariot's way  
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,  
Radiant with million constellations, tinged  
With shades of infinite colour,  
And semicircled with a belt  
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.  
As they approached their goal  
The coursers seemed to gather speed ;  
The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth  
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere ;  
The sun's unclouded orb  
Rolled through the black concave ;  
Its rays of rapid light  
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,  
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray  
Dashed from the boiling surge  
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.  
Earth's distant orb appeared  
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven ;  
Whilst round the chariot's way  
Innumerable systems rolled,  
And countless spheres diffused  
An ever-varying glory.  
It was a sight of wonder : some

Were hornèd likè the crescent moon ;  
Some shed a mild and silver beam  
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea ;  
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,  
Like worlds to death and ruin driven ;  
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,  
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here !  
In this interminable wilderness  
Of worlds, at whose immensity  
Even soaring fancy staggers,  
Here is thy fitting temple.  
Yet not the lightest leaf  
That quivers to the passing breeze  
Is less instinct with thee :  
Yet not the meanest worm  
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead  
Less shares thy eternal breath.  
Spirit of Nature ! thou !  
Imperishable as this scene,  
Here is thy fitting temple.

## II

If solitude hath ever led thy steps  
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,  
And thou hast lingered there,  
Until the sun's broad orb  
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,  
Thou must have marked the lines  
Of purple gold, that motionless  
Hung o'er the sinking sphere :  
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds  
Edged with intolerable radiancy  
Towering like rocks of jet

Crowned with a diamond wreath.  
And yet there is a moment,  
When the sun's highest point  
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,  
When those far clouds of feathery gold,  
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam  
Like islands on a dark blue sea ;  
Then has the fancy soared above the earth,  
And furled its wearied wing  
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands  
Gleaming in yon flood of light,  
Nor the feathery curtains  
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,  
Nor the burnished ocean waves  
Paving that gorgeous dome,  
So fair, so wonderful a sight  
As Mab's ætherial palace could afford.  
Yet likest evening's vault, that faery Hall !  
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread  
Its floors of flashing light,  
Its vast and azure dome,  
Its fertile golden islands  
Floating on a silver sea ;  
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted  
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,  
And pearly battlements around  
Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.  
The Fairy and the Spirit  
Entered the Hall of Spells :  
Those golden clouds,  
That rolled in glittering billows  
Beneath the azure canopy,  
With the ætherial footsteps trembled not :



The light and crimson mists,  
Floating to strains of thrilling melody  
Through that unearthly dwelling,  
Yielded to every movement of the will.  
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,  
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,  
Used not the glorious privilege  
Of virtue and of wisdom.

Spirit ! the Fairy said,  
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,  
This is a wondrous sight  
And mocks all human grandeur ;  
But, were it virtue's only meed to dwell  
In a celestial palace, all resigned  
To pleasurable impulses, immured  
Within the prison of itself, the will  
Of changeless nature would be unfulfilled.  
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come !  
This is thine high reward :—the past shall rise ;  
Thou shalt behold the present ; I will teach  
The secrets of the future.

The Fairy and the Spirit  
Approached the overhanging battlement.—  
Below lay stretched the universe !  
There, far as the remotest line  
That bounds imagination's flight,  
Countless and unending orbs  
In mazy motion intermingled,  
Yet still fulfilled immutably  
Eternal nature's law.  
Above, below, around  
The circling systems formed  
A wilderness of harmony ;  
Each with undeviating aim,  
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space

Pursued its wondrous way.  
There was a little light  
That twinkled in the misty distance :  
None but a spirit's eye  
Might ken that rolling orb ;  
None but a spirit's eye,  
And in no other place  
But that celestial dwelling, might behold  
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.  
But matter, space and time  
In those ærial mansions cease to act ;  
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps  
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds  
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul  
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.  
The Spirit's intellectual eye  
Its kindred beings recognized.  
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,  
Seemed like an anthill's citizens.  
How wonderful ! that even  
The passions, prejudices, interests,  
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch  
That moves the finest nerve,  
And in one human brain  
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link  
In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried,  
Palmyra's ruined palaces !—  
Behold ! where grandeur frowned ;  
Behold ! where pleasure smiled ;  
What now remains ?—the memory  
Of senselessness and shame—  
What is immortal there ?  
Nothing—it stands to tell

A melancholy tale, to give  
An awful warning : soon  
Oblivion will steal silently  
The remnant of its fame.  
Monarchs and conquerors there  
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—  
The earthquakes of the human race  
Like them, forgotten when the ruin  
That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile,  
The Pyramids have risen.  
Nile shall pursue his changeless way :  
Those pyramids shall fall ;  
Yea ! not a stone shall stand to tell  
The spot whereon they stood !  
Their very site shall be forgotten  
As is their builder's name !

Behold yon sterile spot,  
Where now the wandering Arab's tent  
Flaps in the desert-blast.  
There once old Salem's haughty fane  
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,  
And in the blushing face of day  
Exposed its shameful glory.  
Oh ! many a widow, many an orphan cursed  
The building of that fane ; and many a father,  
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored  
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,  
And spare his children the detested task  
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning  
The choicest days of life,  
To soothe a dotard's vanity.  
There an inhuman and uncultured race  
Howled hideous praises to their Dæmon-God ;  
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb

The unborn child,—old age and infancy  
Promiscuous perished ; their victorious arms  
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh ! they were fiends :  
But what was he who taught them that the God  
Of nature and benevolence hath given  
A special sanction to the trade of blood ?  
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales  
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture  
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing  
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,  
There is a moral desert now :  
The mean and miserable huts,  
The yet more wretched palaces,  
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,  
Now crumbling to oblivion ;  
The long and lonely colonnades,  
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,  
Seem like a well-known tune  
Which, in some dear scene we have loved to hear,  
Remembered now in sadness.  
But, oh ! how much more changed,  
How gloomier is the contrast  
Of human nature there !  
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,  
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—  
Then, shuddering, meets his own.  
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,  
A cowed and hypocritical monk  
Prays, curses and deceives.

Spirit ! ten thousand years  
Have scarcely passed away,  
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks  
His enemy's blood, and, aping Europe's sons,  
Wakes the unholy song of war,

Arose a stately city,  
Metropolis of the western continent :  
There, now, the mossy column-stone,  
Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,  
Which once appeared to brave  
All, save its country's ruin ;  
There the wide forest scene,  
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness  
Of gardens long run wild,  
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps  
Chance in that desert has delayed,  
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.  
Yet once it was the busiest haunt,  
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked  
Strangers, and ships, and merchandise :  
Once peace and freedom blessed  
The cultivated plain :  
But wealth, that curse of man,  
Blighted the bud of its prosperity :  
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,  
Fled, to return not, until man shall know  
That they alone can give the bliss  
Worthy a soul that claims  
Its kindred with eternity.

There's not one atom of yon earth  
But once was living man ;  
Nor the minutest drop of rain,  
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,  
But flowed in human veins :  
And from the burning plains  
Where Lybian monsters yell,  
From the most gloomy glens  
Of Greenland's sunless clime,  
To where the golden fields  
Of fertile England spread  
Their harvest to the day,

Thou canst not find one spot  
Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride !  
I tell thee that those living things,  
To whom the fragile blade of grass,  
That springeth in the morn  
And perisheth ere noon,  
Is an unbounded world ;  
I tell thee that those viewless beings,  
Whose mansion is the smallest particle  
Of the impassive atmosphere,  
Think, feel and live like man ;  
That their affections and antipathies,  
Like his, produce the laws  
Ruling their moral state ;  
And the minutest throb  
That through their frame diffuses  
The slightest, faintest motion,  
Is fixed and indispensable  
As the majestic laws  
That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,  
In ecstasy of admiration, felt  
All knowledge of the past revived ; the events  
Of old and wondrous times,  
Which dim tradition interruptedly  
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded  
In just perspective to the view ;  
Yet dim from their infinitude.  
The Spirit seemed to stand  
High on an isolated pinnacle ;  
The flood of ages combating below,  
The depth of the unbounded universe  
Above, and all around  
Nature's unchanging harmony.

## III

FAIRY ! the Spirit said,  
And on the Queen of spells  
Fixed her ætherial eyes,  
I thank thee. Thou hast given  
A boon which I will not resign, and taught  
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know  
The past, and thence I will essay to glean  
A warning for the future, so that man  
May profit by his errors, and derive  
Experience from his folly :  
For, when the power of imparting joy  
Is equal to the will, the human soul  
Requires no other heaven.

## MAB

Turn thee, surpassing Spirit !  
Much yet remains unscanned.  
Thou knowest how great is man,  
Thou knowest his imbecility :  
Yet learn thou what he is ;  
Yet learn the lofty destiny  
Which restless time prepares  
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid  
Yon populous city, rears its thousand towers  
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops  
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,  
Encompass it around : the dweller there  
Cannot be free and happy ; hearest thou not  
The curses of the fatherless, the groans  
Of those who have no friend ? He passes on :  
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain  
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool  
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave

Even to the basest appetites—that man  
 Heeds not thê shriek of penury ; he smiles  
 At the deep curses which the destitute  
 Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy  
 Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan  
 But for those morsels which his wantonness  
 Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save  
 All that they love from famine : when he hears  
 The tale of horror, to some ready-made face  
 Of hypocritical assent he turns,  
 Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,  
 Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal  
 Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags  
 His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,  
 Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled  
 From every clime, could force the loathing sense  
 To overcome satiety,—if wealth  
 The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,  
 Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not  
 Its food to deadliest venom ; then that king  
 Is happy ; and the peasant who fulfils  
 His unforced task, when he returns at even,  
 And by the blazing faggot meets again  
 Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,  
 Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now  
 Stretched on the gorgeous couch ; his fevered brain  
 Reels dizzily awhile : but ah ! too soon  
 The slumber of intemperance subsides,  
 And conscience, that undying serpent, calls  
 Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.  
 Listen ! he speaks ! oh ! mark that frenzied eye—  
 Oh ! mark that deadly visage.

KING

No cessation !  
 Oh ! must this last for ever ! Awful Death,



I wish, yet fear to clasp thee !—Not one moment  
 Of dreamless sleep ! O dear and blessed Peace !  
 Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity  
 In penury and dungeons ? wherefore lurkest  
 With danger, death, and solitude ; yet shun'st  
 The palace I have built thee ? Sacred Peace !  
 Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed  
 One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

Vain man ! that palace is the virtuous heart,  
 And Peace defileth not her snowy robes  
 In such a shed as thine. Hark ! yet he mutters ;  
 His slumbers are but varied agonies,  
 They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.  
 There needeth not the hell that bigots frame  
 To punish those who err : earth in itself  
Contains at once the evil and the cure ;  
 And all-sufficing nature can chastise  
 Those who transgress her law,—she only knows  
 How justly to proportion to the fault  
 The punishment it merits.

Is it strange  
 That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe ?  
 Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug  
 The scorpion that consumes him ? Is it strange  
 That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,  
 Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured  
 Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds  
 Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,  
 His soul asserts not its humanity ?  
 That man's mild nature rises not in war  
 Against a king's employ ? No—'tis not strange.  
 He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives  
 Just as his father did ; the unconquered powers  
 Of precedent and custom interpose  
 Between a *king* and virtue. Stranger yet,  
 To those who know not nature, nor deduce  
 The future from the present, it may seem,

That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes  
 Of this unnatural being, not one wretch,  
 Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed  
 Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm  
 To dash him from his throne !

Those gilded flies

That, basking in the sunshine of a court,  
 Fatten on its corruption !—what are they ?  
 —The drones of the community ; they feed  
 On the mechanic's labour : the starved hind  
 For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield  
 Its unshared harvests ; and yon squalid form,  
 Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes  
 A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,  
 Drags out in labour a protracted death,  
 To glut their grandeur ; many faint with toil,  
 That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose ?  
 Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap  
 Toil and unvanquishable penury  
 On those who build their palaces, and bring  
 Their daily bread ? —From vice, black loathsome  
 vice ;  
 From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong ;  
 From all that genders misery, and makes  
 Of earth this thorny wilderness ; from lust,  
 Revenge, and murder.....And when reason's voice,  
 Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked  
 The nations ; and mankind perceive that vice  
 Is discord, war, and misery ; that virtue  
 Is peace, and happiness and harmony ;  
 When man's maturer nature shall disdain  
 The playthings of its childhood ;—kingly glare  
 Will lose its power to dazzle ; its authority  
 Will silently pass by ; the gorgeous throne  
 Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,  
 Fast falling to decay ; whilst falsehood's trade

Shall be as hateful and unprofitable  
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame  
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth  
Seek to eternize ? Oh ! the faintest sound  
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave  
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing  
The unsubstantial bubble. Aye ! to-day  
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze  
That flashes desolation, strong the arm  
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes :  
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died  
In ages past ; that gaze, a transient flash  
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm  
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,  
Who, great in his humility, as kings  
Are little in their grandeur ; he who leads  
Invincibly a life of resolute good,  
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths  
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,  
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove  
To bind the impassive spirit ;—when he falls,  
His mild eye beams benevolence no more :  
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve ;  
Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled  
But to appal the guilty. Yes ! the grave  
Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost  
Withered that arm : but the unfading fame  
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb ;  
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings  
Call to their mind and tremble ; the remembrance  
With which the happy spirit contemplates  
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,  
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man  
The subject, not the citizen : for kings

And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play  
A losing game into each other's hands,  
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man  
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.  
Power, like a desolating pestilence,  
Pollutes whate'er it touches ; and obedience,  
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,  
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,  
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,  
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy  
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear  
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld  
The frightful desolation spread, and felt  
A new created sense within his soul  
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound,  
Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome  
The force of human kindness ? and, when Rome,  
With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,  
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,  
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed  
Nature's suggestions ?

Look on yonder earth :  
The golden harvests spring ; the unfailing sun  
Sheds light and life ; the fruits, the flowers, the  
trees,  
Arise in due succession ; all things speak  
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,  
In nature's silent eloquence, declares  
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—  
All but the outcast man. He fabricates  
The sword which stabs his peace ; he cherisheth  
The snakes that gnaw his heart ; he raiseth up  
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,  
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,  
Lights it the great alone ? Yon silver beams,  
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,  
Than on the dome of kings ? Is Mother Earth

A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn  
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil ;  
A mother only to those puling babes  
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men  
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar  
In self-important childishness that peace  
Which men alone appreciate ?

Spirit of Nature ! no.  
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs  
Alike in every human heart.  
Thou, aye, erectest there  
Thy throne of power unappealable :  
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod  
Man's brief and frail authority  
Is powerless as the wind  
That passeth idly by.  
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth  
The show of human justice,  
As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature ! thou  
Life of interminable multitudes ;  
Soul of those mighty spheres  
Whose changeless paths thro' Heaven's deep silence lie ;  
Soul of that smallest being,  
The dwelling of whose life  
Is one faint April sun-gleam ;—  
Man, like these passive things.  
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth :  
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,  
Which time is fast maturing,  
Will swiftly, surely come ;  
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,  
Will be without a flaw  
Marring its perfect symmetry.

## IV

How beautiful this night ! the balmiest sigh,  
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,  
Were discord to the speaking quietude  
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault  
Studded with stars unutterably bright,  
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,  
Seems like a canopy which love had spread  
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,  
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow ;  
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,  
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires  
Tinge not the moon's pure beam ; yon castled steep,  
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower  
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it  
A metaphor of peace ; all form a scene  
Where musing solitude might love to lift  
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness ;  
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,  
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,  
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field  
Sinks sweetly smiling : not the faintest breath  
Steals o'er the unruffled deep ; the clouds of eve  
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day ;  
And ~~vesper's~~ vesper's image on the western main  
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes :  
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,  
Roll o'er the blackened waters ; the deep roar  
Of distant thunder mutters awfully ;  
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom  
That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless fiend,  
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey ;  
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave  
Beneath its jagged gulph.

Ah ! whence yon glare  
That fires the arch of heaven ?—that dark red smoke  
Blotting the silver moon ? the stars are quenched  
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow  
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round !  
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deaf'ning peals  
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,  
Startling pale midnight on her starry throne !  
Now swells the intermingling din ; the jar  
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb ;  
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,  
The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men  
Inebriate with rage :—loud and more loud  
The discord grows ; till pale Death shuts the scene,  
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws  
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men  
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,  
In proud and vigorous health ; of all the hearts  
That beat with anxious life at sunset there ;  
How few survive, how few are beating now !  
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm  
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause ;  
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love  
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan  
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay  
Wrapped round its struggling powers.

The grey morn  
Dawns on the mournful scene ; the sulphurous smoke  
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,  
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance  
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood  
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,  
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments  
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path  
Of the out-sallying victors : far behind,  
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.  
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—  
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day

Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,  
 Surpassing Spirit !—wert thou human else ?  
 I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet  
 Across thy stainless features : yet fear not ;  
 This is no unconnected misery,  
 Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.  
 Man's evil nature, that apology  
 Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up  
 For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood  
 Which desolates the discord-wasted land.  
 From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,  
 Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,  
 Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe  
 Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall ;  
 And where its venom'd exhalations spread  
 Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay  
 Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones  
 Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,  
 A garden shall arise, in loveliness  
 Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,  
 That formed this world so beautiful, that spread  
 Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord  
 Strung to unchanging unison, that gave  
 The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,  
 That yielded to the wanderers of the deep  
 The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,  
 And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust  
 With spirit, thought, and love ; on Man alone,  
 Partial in causeless malice, wantonly  
 Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery ; his soul  
 Blasted with withering curses ; placed afar  
 The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,  
 But serving on the frightful gulph to glare,  
 Rent wide beneath his footsteps ?

Nature !—no !  
 Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower



Even in its tender bud ; their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society. The child,  
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,  
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts  
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.  
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge  
Of devastated earth ; whilst specious names,  
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,  
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims  
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword  
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.  
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man  
Inherits vice and misery, when force  
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,  
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah ! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps  
From its new tenement, and looks abroad  
For happiness and sympathy, how stern  
And desolate a tract is this wide world !  
How withered all the buds of natural good !  
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms  
Of pitiless power ! On its wretched frame,  
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe  
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung  
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds  
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,  
May breathe not. The untainting light of day  
May visit not its longings. It is bound  
Ere it has life : yea, all the chains are forged  
Long ere its being : all liberty and love  
And peace is torn from its defencelessness ;  
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed  
To abjectness and bondage !

Throughout this varied and eternal world  
Soul is the only element, the block

That for uncounted ages has remained.  
 The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight  
 Is active, living spirit. Every grain  
 Is sentient both in unity and part,  
 And the minutest atom comprehends  
 A world of loves and hatreds ; these beget  
 Evil and good : hence truth and falsehood spring ;  
 Hence will and thought and action, all the germs  
 Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,  
 That variegate the eternal universe.  
 Soul is not more polluted than the beams  
 Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines  
 The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds  
 Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing  
 To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn  
 The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste  
 The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.  
 Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,  
 To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,  
 To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame  
Of natural love in sensualism, to know  
 That hour as bless'd when on his worthless days  
 The frozen hand of Death shall set its seal,  
 Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.  
 The one is man that shall hereafter be ;  
 The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,  
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,  
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones  
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,  
 The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.  
 Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround  
 Their palaces, participate the crimes  
 That force defends, and from a nation's rage  
 Secure the crown, which all the curses reach

That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.  
These are the hired bravos who defend  
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear :  
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,  
The refuse of society, the dregs  
Of all that is most vile : their cold hearts blend  
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,  
All that is mean and villainous, with rage  
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,  
Alone might kindle ; they are decked in wealth,  
Honour and power, then are sent abroad  
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks  
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land  
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,  
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth  
Already crushed with servitude : he knows  
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes  
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom  
Is sealed in gold and blood !  
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare  
The feet of justice in the toils of law,  
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still ;  
And, right or wrong, will vindicate for gold,  
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath  
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where  
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,  
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,  
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,  
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,  
Support the system whence their honours flow....  
They have three words :—well tyrants know their use,  
Well pay them for the loan with usury  
Torn from a bleeding world !—God, Hell, and Heaven.  
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,  
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage  
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.

Hell, a red gulph of everlasting fire,  
 Where poisonous and undying worms prolong  
 Eternal misery to those hapless slaves  
 Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.  
 And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie  
 Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe  
 Before the mockeries of earthly power.

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,  
 Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,  
 Omnipotent in wickedness : the while  
 Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does  
 His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend  
 Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.  
 They rise, they fall ; one generation comes  
 Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.  
 It fades, another blossoms : yet behold !  
 Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,  
 Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.  
 He has invented lying words and modes,  
 Empty and vain as his own coreless heart ;  
 Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,  
 To lure the heedless victim to the toils  
 Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince !  
 Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts  
 Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,  
 With whom thy master was ;—or thou delight'st  
 In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,  
 All misery weighing nothing in the scale  
 Against thy short-lived fame : or thou dost load  
 With cowardice and crime the groaning land,  
 A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self !  
 Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er  
 Crawled on the loathing earth ? Are not thy days  
 Days of unsatisfying listlessness ?  
 Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,

When will the morning come ? 'Is not thy youth  
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism ?  
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease ?  
Are not thy views of unregretted death  
Drear, comfortless, and horrible ? Thy mind,  
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,  
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love ?  
And dost thou wish the errors to survive  
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,  
After the miserable interest  
Thou hold'st in their protraction ? When the grave  
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,  
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth  
To twine its roots around thy confined clay,  
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,  
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die ?

## V

Thus do the generations of the earth  
Go to the grave and issue from the womb,  
Surviving still the imperishable change  
That renovates the world ; even as the leaves  
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year  
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped  
For many seasons there, though long they choke,  
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,  
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees  
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,  
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,  
They fertilize the land they long deformed,  
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs  
Of youth, integrity and loveliness,  
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.  
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights  
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,  
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil

Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,  
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war  
With passion's unsubduable array.  
Twin-sister of religion, selfishness !  
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all  
The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;  
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,  
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,  
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen  
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,  
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare  
All, save the brood of ignorance : at once  
The cause and the effect of tyranny ;  
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile ;  
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,  
With heart impassive by more noble powers  
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame ;  
Despising its own miserable being,  
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange  
Of all that human art or nature yield ;  
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,  
And natural kindness hasten to supply  
From the full fountain of its boundless love,  
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.  
Commerce ! beneath whose poison-breathing shade  
No solitary virtue dares to spring,  
But poverty and wealth with equal hand  
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold  
The doors of premature and violent death,  
To pining famine and full-fed disease,  
To all that shares the lot of human life,  
Which poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain,  
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,  
The signet of its all-enslaving power,

Upon a shining ore, and called it gold :  
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,  
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,  
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,  
And with blind feelings reverence the power  
That grinds them to the dust of misery.  
But in the temple of their hireling hearts  
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn  
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,  
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame  
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,  
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world  
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.  
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes  
The despot numbers ; from his cabinet  
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,  
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,  
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform  
A task of cold and brutal drudgery ;—  
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,  
Scarce living pullies of a dead machine,  
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,  
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth !

The harmony and happiness of man  
Yields to the wealth of nations ; that which lifts  
His nature to the heaven of its pride,  
Is bartered for the poison of his soul ;  
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,  
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,  
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,  
Extinguishing all free and generous love  
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse  
That fancy kindles in the beating heart  
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—  
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,

The grovelling hope of interest and gold,  
 Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed  
 Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast  
 Of wealth! The wordy eloquence that lives  
 After the ruin of their hearts, can gild  
 The bitter poison of a nation's woe,  
 Can turn the worship of the servile mob  
 To their corrupt and glaring idol fame,  
 From virtue, trampled by its iron tread,  
 Although its dazzling pedestal be raised  
 Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,  
 With desolated dwellings smoking round.  
 The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,  
 To deeds of charitable intercourse  
 And bare fulfilment of the common laws  
 Of decency and prejudice, confines  
 The struggling nature of his human heart,  
 Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds  
 A passing tear perchance upon the wreck  
 Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door  
 The frightful waves are driven,—when his son  
 Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion  
 Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,  
 Whose life is misery, and fear, and care;  
 Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;  
 Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,  
 Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze  
 For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye  
 Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene  
 Of thousands like himself;—he little heeds  
 The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate  
 Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn  
 The vain and bitter mockery of words,  
 Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,  
 And unrestrained but by the arm of power,  
 That knows and dreads his enmity.



The iron rod of penury still compels  
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,  
And poison, with unprofitable toil,  
A life too void of solace to confirm  
The very chains that bind him to his doom.  
Nature, impartial in munificence,  
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.  
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,  
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,  
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.  
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,  
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,  
In unremitting drudgery and care !  
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled  
His energies, no longer tameless then,  
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail !  
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken  
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity  
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in heaven  
To light the midnights of his native town !

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ :  
The wisest of the sages of the earth,  
That ever from the stores of reason drew  
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,  
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,  
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued  
With pure desire and universal love,  
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,  
Untainted passion, elevated will,  
Which death (who even would linger long in awe  
Within his noble presence, and beneath  
His changeless eyebeam) might alone subdue.  
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth  
Of some corrupted city his sad life,  
Pining with famine, swol'n with luxury,  
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense  
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,

Of madly rushing through all violent crime,  
 To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—  
 Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust  
 Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,  
 That all within it but the virtuous man  
 Is venal : gold or fame will surely reach  
 The price prefixed by selfishness, to all  
 But him of resolute and unchanging will ;  
 Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,  
 Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,  
 Can bribe to yield his elevated soul  
 To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield  
 With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold : the very light of heaven  
 Is venal ; earth's unsparing gifts of love,  
 The smallest and most despicable things  
 That lurk in the abysses of the deep,  
 All objects of our life, even life itself,  
 And the poor pittance which the laws allow  
 Of liberty, the fellowship of man,  
 Those duties which his heart of human love  
 Should urge him to perform instinctively,  
 Are bought and sold as in a public mart  
 Of undisguising selfishness, that sets  
 On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.  
Even love is sold ; the solace of all woe  
 Is turned to deadliest agony ; old age  
 Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms ;  
 And youth's corrupted impulses prepare  
 A life of horror from the blighting bane  
 Of commerce ; whilst the pestilence that springs  
 From unenjoying sensualism has filled  
 All human life with hydra-headed woes.  
 Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs  
 Of outraged conscience ; for the slavish priest  
 Sets no great value on his hireling faith :

*Queen Mab,*

A little passing pomp, some servile souls,  
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,  
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe  
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,  
Can make him minister to tyranny.  
More daring crime requires a loftier meed :  
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends  
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,  
When the dread eloquence of dying men,  
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,  
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells  
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,  
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,  
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still !

There is a nobler glory, which survives  
Until our being fades, and, solacing  
All human care, accompanies its change ;  
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,  
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides  
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime  
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,  
Even when, from power's avenging hand, he takes  
Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death ;  
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,  
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,  
Can purchase ; but a life of resolute good,  
Unalterable will, quenchless desire  
Of universal happiness, the heart  
That beats with it in unison, the brain,  
Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change  
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs  
No mediative signs of selfishness,  
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,  
No balancings of prudence, cold and long ;  
In just and equal measure all is weighed,

One scale contains the sum of human weal,  
And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek  
The selfish for that happiness denied  
To aught but virtue ! Blind and hardened, they,  
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,  
Who covet power they know not how to use,  
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give,—  
Madly they frustrate still their own designs ;  
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy  
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,  
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,  
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade  
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt  
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave :  
A brighter morn awaits the human day,  
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts  
Shall be a commerce of good words and works ;  
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,  
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,  
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell  
Shall live but in the memory of Time,  
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,  
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

## VI

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,  
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.  
O'er the thin texture of its frame,  
The varying periods painted changing glows,  
As on a summer even,  
When soul-enfolding music floats around,  
The stainless mirror of the lake  
Re-images the eastern gloom,

Mingling convulsively its purple hues  
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke :  
It is a wild and miserable world !  
Thorny, and full of care,  
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.  
O Fairy ! in the lapse of years,  
Is there no hope in store ?  
Will yon vast suns roll on  
Interminably, still illuming  
The night of so many wretched souls,  
And see no hope for them ?  
Will not the universal Spirit e'er  
Revivify this withered limb of Heaven ?

The Fairy calmly smiled  
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope  
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.  
Oh ! rest thee tranquil ; chase those fearful doubts,  
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,  
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.  
Yes ! crime and misery are in yonder earth,  
Falsehood, ~~mistake~~, and lust ;  
But the eternal world  
Contains at once the evil and the cure.  
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,  
Even in perverseness time :  
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,  
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath  
Of ever-living flame,  
Until the monster sting itself to death.

How sweet a scene will earth become !  
Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place,  
Symphonious with the planetary spheres ;  
When man, with changeless nature coalescing,  
Will undertake regeneration's work,

When its ungenial poles no longer point  
To the red and baleful sun  
That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit ! on yonder earth,  
Falsehood now triumphs ; deadly power  
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth !  
Madness and misery are there !  
The happiest is most wretched ! Yet confide,  
Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy,  
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.  
Now, to the scene I show, in silence turn,  
And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,  
Which nature soon, with recreating hand,  
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.  
How bold the flight of passion's wandering wing,  
How swift the step of reason's firmer tread,  
How calm and sweet the victories of life,  
How terrorless the triumph of the grave !  
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,  
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown !  
How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar !  
The weight of his exterminating curse,  
How light ! and his affected charity,  
To suit the pressure of the changing times,  
What palpable deceit !—but for thy aid,  
Religion ! but for thee, prolific fiend,  
Who peopled earth with dæmons, hell with men,  
And heaven with slaves !

“Thou taintest all thou lookest upon !—the stars,  
Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,  
Were gods to the distempered playfulness  
Of thy untutored infancy : the trees,  
The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea,  
All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,  
Were gods : the sun had homage, and the moon  
Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,

More daring in thy frenzies : every shape,  
Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,  
Which, from sensation's relics, fancy culls ;  
The spirit of the air, the shuddering ghost,  
The genii of the elements, the powers  
That give a shape to nature's varied works,  
Had life and place in the corrupt belief  
Of thy blind heart : yet still thy youthful hands  
Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave  
Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain ;  
Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,  
Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride :  
Their everlasting and unchanging laws  
Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stood'st  
Baffled and gloomy ; then thou didst sum up  
The elements of all that thou didst know ;  
The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,  
The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,  
The eternal orbs that beautify the night,  
The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,  
Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,  
And all their causes, to an abstract point,  
Converging, thou didst bend and called it God !  
The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,  
The merciful, and the avenging God !  
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits  
High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,  
Even like an earthly king ; and whose dread work,  
Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves  
Of fate, whom he created, in his sport,  
To triumph in their torments when they fell !  
Earth heard the name ; earth trembled, as the smoke  
Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,  
Blotting the constellations ; and the cries  
Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence  
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds  
Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths  
Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the land ;

Whilst innocent babes writhed 'on thy stubborn spear,  
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek  
Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel  
Felt cold in her torn entrails !

Religion ! thou wert then in manhood's prime :  
But age crept on : one God would not suffice  
For senile puerility ; thou framedst  
A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut  
Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend  
Thy wickedness had pictured might afford  
A plea for sating the unnatural thirst  
For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,  
That still consumed thy being, even when  
Thou heard'st the step of fate ;—that flames might light  
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks  
Of parents dying on the pile that burned  
To light their children to thy paths, the roar  
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries  
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,  
    Might sate thine hungry ear  
    Even on the bed of death !

But now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs ;  
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,  
Unhonoured and unpitied, but by those  
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds  
Like thine a glare that fades before the sun  
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night  
That long has lowered above the ruined world.

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,  
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused  
A spirit of activity and life,  
That knows no term, cessation, or decay ;  
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,  
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,  
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe



In the dim newness of its being' feels  
The impulses of sublunary things,  
And all is wonder to unpractised sense :  
But, active, steadfast, and eternal, still  
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,  
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,  
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease ;  
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly  
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes  
Its undecaying battlement, presides,  
Apportioning with irresistible law  
The place each spring of its machine shall fill ;  
So that, when waves on waves tumultuous heap  
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven  
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords,  
Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,  
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,  
All seems unlinked contingency and chance,—  
No atom of this turbulence fulfils  
A vague and unnecessitated task,  
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.  
Even the minutest molecule of light,  
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow  
Fulfils its destined though invisible work,  
The universal Spirit guides ; nor less,  
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,  
Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,  
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,  
And call the sad work glory, does it rule  
All passions : not a thought, a will, an act,  
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,  
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast  
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,  
Nor the events enchaining every will,  
That from the depths of unrecorded time  
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass  
Unrecognized, or unforeseen by thee,  
Soul of the Universe ! eternal spring

Of life and death, of happiness and woe,  
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene  
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,  
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,  
Whose chains and massy walls  
We feel, but cannot see.

Spirit of Nature ! all-sufficing Power,  
Necessity ! thou mother of the world !  
Unlike the God of human error, thou  
Requir'st no prayers or praises ; the caprice  
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee  
Than do the changeful passions of his breast  
To thy unvarying harmony : the slave,  
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,  
And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous pride,  
His being, in the sight of happiness  
That springs from his own works ; the poison-tree,  
Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,  
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords  
A temple where the vows of happy love  
Are registered, are equal in thy sight :  
No love, no hate thou cherishest ; revenge  
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame  
Thou know'st not : all that the wide world contains  
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou  
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,  
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,  
Because thou hast not human sense,  
Because thou art not human mind.

Yes ! when the sweeping storm of time  
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes  
And broken altars of the almighty fiend,  
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood  
Through centuries clotted there has floated down  
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live  
Unchangeable ! A shrine is raised to thee,

Which, nor the tempest breath of time,  
Nor the interminable flood,  
Over earth's slight pageant rolling,  
    Availeth to destroy,—  
The sensitive extension of the world.  
That wondrous and eternal fane,  
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,  
To do the will of strong necessity,  
And life, in multitudinous shapes,  
Still pressing forward where no term can be,  
    Like hungry and unresting flame  
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.

## VII

## SPIRIT

I WAS an infant when my mother went  
To see an atheist burned. She took me there :  
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile ;  
The multitude was gazing silently ;  
And, as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,  
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,  
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth :  
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs ;  
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon ;  
His death-pang rent my heart ! the insensate mob  
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.  
Weep not, child ! cried my mother, for that man  
Has said, There is no God.

## FAIRY

                                There is no God !  
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed :  
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,  
His ceaseless generations tell their tale ;  
Let every part depending on the chain  
That links it to the whole, point to the hand

That grasps its term ! let every seed that falls  
 In silent eloquence unfold its store  
 Of argument : infinity within,  
 Infinity without, belie creation ;  
 The exterminable spirit it contains  
 Is nature's only God ; but human pride  
Is skilful to invent most serious names  
To hide its ignorance.

The name of God  
 Has fenced about all crime with holiness,  
 Himself the creature of his worshippers,  
 Whose names and attributes and passions change,  
 Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,  
 Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,  
 Still serving o'er the war-polluted world  
 For desolation's watch-word ; whether hosts  
 Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on  
 Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise  
 A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans ;  
 Or countless partners of his power divide  
 His tyranny to weakness ; or the smoke  
 Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,  
 Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,  
 Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven  
 In honour of his name ; or, last and worst,  
 Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,  
 And priests dare babble of a God of peace,  
 Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,  
 Murdering the while, uprooting every germ  
 Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,  
 Making the earth a slaughter-house !

O Spirit ! through the sense  
 By which thy inner nature was apprised  
 Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled.  
 And varied reminiscences have waked  
 Tablets that never fade ;  
 All things have been imprinted there,

The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,  
Even the unshapeliest lineaments  
Of wild and fleeting visions  
Have left a record there  
To testify of earth.

These are my empire, for to me is given  
The wonders of the human world to keep,  
And fancy's thin creations to endow  
With manner, being, and reality ;  
Therefore a wondrous phantom from the dreams,  
Of human error's dense and purblind faith,  
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.  
Ahasuerus, rise !

A strange and woe-worn wight  
Arose beside the battlement,  
And stood unmoving there.  
His inessential figure cast no shade  
Upon the golden floor ;  
His port and mien bore mark of many years,  
And chronicles of untold ancientness  
Were legible within his beamless eye :  
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth ;  
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame ;  
The wisdom of old age was mingled there  
With youth's primeval dauntlessness ;  
And inexpressible woe,  
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave  
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT

Is there a God ?

AHASUERUS

Is there a God !—aye, an almighty God,  
And vengeful as almighty ! Once his voice

Was heard on earth : earth shuddered at the sound ;  
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed  
Abhorrence ; and the grave of nature yawned  
To swallow all the dauntless and the good  
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,  
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves  
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves who did the work  
Of tyrannous omnipotence ; whose souls  
No honest indignation ever urged  
To elevated daring, to one deed  
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.  
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent fiend,  
Gorgeous and vast : the costly altars smoked  
With human blood, and hideous pæans rung  
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard  
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts  
Had raised him to his eminence in power,  
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,  
And confidant of the all-knowing one.

These were Jehovah's words.

From an eternity of idleness  
I, God, awoke ; in seven days' toil made earth  
From nothing ; rested, and created man :  
I placed him in a paradise, and there  
Planted the tree of evil, so that he  
Might eat and perish, and my soul procure  
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,  
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,  
All misery to my fame. The race of men  
Chosen to my honour, with impunity  
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.  
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,  
Until, with hardened feet, their conquering troops  
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,  
And make my name be dreaded through the land.  
Yet ever burning flame and ceaseless woe  
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,

With every soul on this ungrateful earth,  
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,—even all  
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge  
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.

The murderer's brow

Quivered with horror.

God omnipotent,  
Is there no mercy ? must our punishment  
Be endless ? will long ages roll away,  
And see no term ? Oh ! wherefore hast thou made  
In mockery and wrath this evil earth ?  
Mercy becomes the powerful—be but just :  
O God ! repent and save.

One way remains :

I will beget a son, and he shall bear  
The sins of all the world ; he shall arise  
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,  
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge  
The universal crime ; so that the few  
On whom my grace descends, those who are marked  
As vessels to the honour of their God,  
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save  
Their souls alive : millions shall live and die,  
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,  
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.  
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,  
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal :  
These in a gulph of anguish and of flame  
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,  
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,  
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,  
My honour and the justice of their doom.  
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts  
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,  
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray ?  
Many are called, but few will I elect.  
Do thou my bidding, Moses !

Even the murderer's cheek  
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips  
Scarce faintly uttered—O almighty one,  
I tremble and obey !

O Spirit ! centuries have set their seal  
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,  
Since the Incarnate came : humbly he came,  
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape  
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard,  
Save by the rabble of his native town,  
Even as a parish demagogue. He led  
The crowd ; he taught them justice, truth and peace,  
In semblance ; but he lit within their souls  
The quenchless flames of zeal, and bless'd the sword  
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood  
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.  
At length his mortal frame was led to death.  
I stood beside him : on the torturing cross  
No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense ;  
And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed  
The massacres and misery which his name  
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,  
Go ! go ! in mockery.  
A smile of godlike malice reillumined  
His fading lineaments.—I go, he cried,  
But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth  
Eternally.—The dampness of the grave  
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,  
And long lay tranced upon the charmed soil.  
When I awoke hell burned within my brain,  
Which staggered on its seat ; for all around  
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,  
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,  
And in their various attitudes of death  
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls  
Glared ghastly upon me.

But my soul,



From sight and sense of the polluting woe  
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer  
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven. . .  
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began  
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,  
Resolved to wage unweariable war  
With my almighty Tyrant, and to hurl  
Defiance at his impotence to harm  
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand  
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave  
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given  
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.  
These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn  
Of weak, unstable and precarious power ;  
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war,  
So, when they turned but from the massacre  
Of unoffending infidels, to quench  
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood  
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal  
Froze every human feeling, as the wife  
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,  
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love ;  
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood  
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,  
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught waged,  
Drunk from the winepress of the Almighty's wrath ;  
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,  
Pointed to victory ! When the fray was done,  
No remnant of the exterminated faith  
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,  
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,  
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

Yes ! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe  
The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,  
Confirming all unnatural impulses,  
To sanctify their desolating deeds ;  
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross

O'er the unhappy earth ; then shone the sun  
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel  
Of safe assassination, and all crime  
Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,  
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

Spirit ! no year of my eventful being  
Has passed unstained by crime and misery,  
Which flows from God's own faith. I've marked his  
slaves,

With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile  
The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red  
With murder, feign to stretch the other out  
For brotherhood and peace ; and that they now  
Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds  
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime  
That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise,  
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now  
Establishing the imperishable throne  
Of truth, and stubborn virtue, maketh vain  
The unprevailing malice of my foe,  
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,  
Adds impotent eternities to pain,  
Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast  
To see the smiles of peace around them play,  
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

Thus have I stood,—through a wild waste of years  
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,  
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,  
Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse  
With stubborn and unalterable will,  
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame  
Had scathèd in the wilderness, to stand  
A monument of fadeless ruin there ;  
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves  
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,  
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads

Its worn and withered arms on high  
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.

The Fairy waved her wand :  
Ahasuerus fled  
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,  
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,  
Flee from the morning beam :  
The matter of which dreams are made  
Not more endowed with actual life  
Than this phantasmal portraiture  
Of wandering human thought.

## VIII

THE present and the past thou hast beheld :  
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn  
The secrets of the future.—Time !  
Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,  
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,  
And from the cradles of eternity,  
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep  
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,  
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold  
Thy glorious destiny !

Joy to the Spirit came.  
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,  
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear :  
Earth was no longer hell ;  
✓ Love, freedom, health, had given to  
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,  
And all its pulses beat  
Symphonious to the planetary spheres :  
Then dulcet music swelled  
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul ;  
It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,

Catching new life from transitory death :  
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,  
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea  
And dies on the creation of its breath,  
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,—  
    Was the pure stream of feeling  
    That sprung from these sweet notes,  
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies  
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

    Joy to the Spirit came,—  
Such joy as when a lover sees  
The chosen of his soul in happiness,  
    And witnesses her peace  
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death,  
    Sees her unfaded cheek  
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,  
    Thrills with her lovely eyes,  
Which like two stars amid the heaving main  
    Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen :  
I will not call the ghost of ages gone  
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore ;  
    The present now is past,  
And those events that desolate the earth  
Have faded from the memory of Time,  
Who dares not give reality to that  
Whose being I annul. To me is given  
The wonders of the human world to keep,  
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity  
Exposes now its treasure ; let the sight  
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.  
O human Spirit ! spur thee to the goal  
Where virtue fixes universal peace,  
And midst the ebb and flow of human things,  
Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,  
A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ;  
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled  
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,  
Where matter dared not vegetate or live,  
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude  
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;  
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles  
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls  
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,  
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet  
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves  
And melodize with man's blessed nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand,  
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed  
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,  
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love  
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,  
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,  
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;  
And where the startled wilderness beheld  
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,  
A tigress satiating with the flesh of lambs  
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,  
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,  
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,  
Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles  
To see a babe before his mother's door,  
    Sharing his morning's meal  
With the green and golden basilisk  
    That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail  
Has seen, above the illimitable plain,  
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,  
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread  
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,  
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves

So long have mingled with the gusty wind  
In melancholy loneliness, and swept  
The desert of those ocean solitudes,  
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,  
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,  
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds  
Of kindest human impulses respond.  
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,  
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between  
And fertile valleys resonant with bliss,  
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,  
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore  
To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame  
Of consentaneous love inspires all life :  
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck  
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,  
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness :  
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale  
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad :  
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,  
Glow in the fruits, and mantles on the stream :  
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,  
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride  
The foliage of the ever verdant trees ;  
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,  
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,  
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,  
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit  
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood :  
There might you see him sporting in the sun  
Beside the dreadless kid ; his claws are sheathed,  
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made  
His nature as the nature of a lamb.  
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane

Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows :  
All bitterness is past ; the cup of joy  
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,  
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know  
More misery, and dream more joy than all ;  
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast  
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,  
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,  
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each ;  
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,  
The burthen or the glory of the earth ;  
He chief perceives the change, his being notes  
The gradual renovation, and defines  
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night  
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,  
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost  
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,  
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night ;  
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,  
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,  
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,  
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,  
Fit compeer of the bears that roam around,  
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own :  
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,  
Whose meagre wants but scantily fulfilled  
Apprised him ever of the joyless length  
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached ;  
His death a pang which famine, cold and toil  
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark  
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought :  
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge  
Could wreak on the infringers of her law ;  
One curse alone was spared—the name of God.

Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day  
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,  
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere  
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed  
Unnatural vegetation, where the land  
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,  
Was man a nobler being ; slavery  
Had crushed him to his country's bloodstained dust ;  
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,  
Which all internal impulses destroying,  
Makes human will an article of trade ;  
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,  
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound  
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work  
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,  
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads  
The long-protracted fulness of their woe ;  
Or he was led to legal butchery,  
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun,  
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,  
And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man  
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,  
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,  
Spread like a quenchless fire ; nor truth till late  
Availed to arrest its progress, or create  
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved  
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime :  
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,  
The mimic of surrounding misery,  
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,  
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning  
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind ;  
Bless'd from his birth with all bland impulses,  
Which gently in his noble bosom wake



All kindly passions and all pure desires.  
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,  
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal  
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise  
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift  
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks  
The unprevailing hoariness of age ;  
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene  
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands  
Immortal upon earth : no longer now  
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,  
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,  
Which still avenging nature's broken law  
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,  
All evil passions, and all vain belief,  
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,  
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.  
No longer now the wingèd habitants,  
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,  
Flee from the form of man ; but gather round,  
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands  
Which little children stretch in friendly sport  
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.  
All things are void of terror : man has lost  
His terrible prerogative, and stands  
An equal amidst equals : happiness  
And science dawn though late upon the earth ;  
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame ;  
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,  
Reason and passion cease to combat there ;  
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend  
Their all-subduing energies, and wield  
The sceptre of a vast dominion there ;  
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends  
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,  
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth  
To decorate its paradise of peace.

## IX

O HAPPY Earth ! reality of Heaven !  
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly  
Throng through the human universe aspire ;  
Thou consummation of all mortal hope !  
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will !  
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,  
Verge to one point and blend for ever there :  
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place !  
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,  
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come :  
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven !

Genius has seen thee in thy passionate dreams ;  
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,  
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined  
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss  
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.  
Thou art the end of all desire and will,  
The product of all action ; and the souls  
That by the paths of an aspiring change  
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,  
There rest from the eternity of toil  
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear ;  
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,  
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell  
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,  
That for millenniums had withstood the tide  
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand  
Across that desert where their stones survived  
The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.  
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,  
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,  
That his light-wingèd footstep pressed to dust :

Time was the king of earth : all things gave way  
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,  
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,  
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love ;  
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,  
Till from its native heaven they rolled away :  
First, Crime triumphant o'er all hope careered  
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong ;  
Whilst Falsehood, tricked in Virtue's attributes,  
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,  
Till done by her own venomous sting to death,  
She left the moral world without a law,  
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,  
Nor searing reason with the brand of God.  
Then steadily the happy ferment worked ;  
Reason was free ; and wild though passion went  
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,  
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,  
Yet like the bee returning to her queen,  
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,  
Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child,  
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death :  
The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,  
Without a groan, almost without a fear,  
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,  
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.  
The deadly germs of languor and disease  
Died in the human frame, and purity  
Bless'd with all gifts her earthly worshippers.  
How vigorous then the athletic form of age !  
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow !  
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,  
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity  
On all the mingling lineaments of time.

How lovely the intrepid front of youth !  
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace ;  
Courage of soul that dreaded not a name,  
And elevated will, that journeyed on  
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,  
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,  
And rivets with sensation's softest tie  
The kindred sympathies of human souls,  
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law :  
Those delicate and timid impulses  
In nature's primal modesty arose,  
And with undoubted confidence disclosed  
The growing longings of its dawning love,  
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,  
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,  
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.  
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane  
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life ;  
Woman and man, in confidence and love,  
Equal and free and pure together trod  
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more  
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride  
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked  
Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear,  
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw  
Year after year their stones upon the field,  
Wakening a lonely echo ; and the leaves  
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower  
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook  
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower  
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles  
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung :

It were a sight of awfulness to see  
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,  
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal !  
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.  
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death  
To-day, the breathing marble glows above  
To decorate its memory, and tongues  
Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms  
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,  
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,  
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows  
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,  
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;  
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,  
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone  
That mingled slowly with their native earth :  
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once  
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity  
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone  
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness :  
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair  
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes  
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds  
And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind :  
Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,  
To happier shapes were moulded, and became  
Ministrant to all blissful impulses :  
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,  
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,  
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew  
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene  
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past

Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done :  
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,  
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.  
My spells are past : the present now recurs.  
Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains  
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.  
Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,  
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue  
The gradual paths of an aspiring change :  
For birth and life and death, and that strange state  
Before the naked soul has found its home,  
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge  
The restless wheels of being on their way,  
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,  
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal :  
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense  
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape  
New modes of passion to its frame may lend ;  
Life is its state of action, and the store  
Of all events is aggregated there  
That variegate the eternal universe ;  
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,  
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies  
And happy regions of eternal hope.  
Therefore, O Spirit ! fearlessly bear on :  
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,  
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,  
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,  
To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,  
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,  
Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,  
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,  
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns ;  
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,  
The transient gulph-dream of a startling sleep.  
Death is no foe to virtue : earth has seen

Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,  
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,  
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.  
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene  
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed ?  
Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,  
When to the moonlight walk by Henry led,  
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death ?  
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,  
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,  
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,  
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore ?  
Never : but bravely bearing on, thy will  
Is destined an eternal war to wage  
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot  
The germs of misery from the human heart.  
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe  
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,  
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,  
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease :  
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy  
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,  
When fenced by power and master of the world.  
Thou art sincere and good ; of resolute mind,  
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,  
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.  
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,  
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon  
Which thou hast now received : virtue shall keep  
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,  
And many days of beaming hope shall bless  
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.  
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy  
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch  
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.  
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,

That rolled beside the battlement,  
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.  
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,  
Again the burning wheels inflame  
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.  
Fast and far the chariot flew :  
The vast and fiery globes that rolled  
Around the Fairy's palace-gate  
Lessened by slow degrees and soon appeared  
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs  
That there attendant on the solar power  
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.  
Earth floated then below :  
The chariot paused a moment there ;  
The Spirit then descended :  
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,  
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,  
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.  
The Body and the Soul united then,  
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame :  
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed ;  
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained :  
She looked around in wonder and beheld  
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,  
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,  
And the bright beaming stars  
That through the casement shone.



ALASTOR  
OR  
THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE



## SHELLEY'S PREFACE

THE poem entitled "ALASTOR," may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

The good die first,  
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,  
Burn to the socket!

*December 14, 1815.*

# ALASTOR

## OR

### THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem,  
amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, belovèd brotherhood !  
If <sup>thy</sup> great Mother has imbued my soul  
With aught of natural piety to feel  
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;  
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,  
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,  
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;  
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,  
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns  
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;  
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes  
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;  
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast  
I consciously have injured, but still loved  
And cherished these my kindred ; then forgive  
This boast, belovèd brethren, and withdraw  
No portion of your wonted favour now !

Mother of this unfathomable world !  
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved  
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched  
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,  
And my heart ever gazes on the depth  
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed

In charnels and on coffins, where black death  
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,  
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings  
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,  
Thy messenger, to render up the tale  
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,  
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,  
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist  
Staking his very life on some dark hope,  
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks  
With my most innocent love, until strange tears  
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made  
Such magic as compels the charmed night  
To render up thy charge : . . . and, though ne'er yet  
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,  
Enough from incommunicable dream,  
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,  
Has shone within me, that serenely now  
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre  
Suspended in the solitary dome  
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,  
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain  
May modulate with murmurs of the air,  
And motions of the forests and the sea,  
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns  
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb  
No human hands with pious reverence reared,  
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds  
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid  
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness :—  
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked  
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,  
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :—  
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard  
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :  
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.

Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,  
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined  
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes:  
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,  
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,  
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,  
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight  
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,  
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.  
The fountains of divine philosophy  
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,  
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past  
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt  
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left  
His cold fireside and alienated home  
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.  
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness  
Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought  
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,  
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps  
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er  
The red volcano overcanopies  
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice  
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes  
On black bare pointed islets ever beat  
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves  
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs  
Of fire and poison, inaccessible  
To avarice or pride, their starry domes  
Of diamond and of gold expand above  
Numberless and immeasurable halls,  
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines  
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.  
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty  
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven  
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims

To love and wonder ; he would linger long  
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,  
Until the doves and squirrels would partake  
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,  
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,  
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er  
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend  
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form  
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,  
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited  
The awful ruins of the days of old :  
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste  
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers  
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,  
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange  
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk  
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,  
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills  
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,  
Stupendous columns, and wild images  
Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch  
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men  
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,  
He lingered, poring on memorials  
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day  
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon  
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,  
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed  
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind  
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw  
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,  
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,  
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole  
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—  
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe



To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,  
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips  
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath  
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn  
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home  
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie  
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,  
And o'er the ærial mountains which pour down  
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,  
In joy and exultation held his way ;  
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within  
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine  
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,  
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched  
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep  
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet  
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid  
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.  
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul  
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,  
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held  
His inmost sense suspended in its web  
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.  
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,  
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,  
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,  
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood  
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame  
A permeating fire : wild numbers then  
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs  
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands  
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp  
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins  
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.  
The beating of her heart was heard to fill  
The pauses of her music, and her breath

Tumultuously accorded with those fits  
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,  
As if her heart impatiently endured  
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,  
And saw by the warm light of their own life  
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil  
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,  
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,  
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips  
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.  
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess  
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled  
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet  
Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,  
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,  
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry  
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.  
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night  
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,  
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,  
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—  
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon  
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,  
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,  
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled  
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower  
Of yesternight ? The sounds that soothed his sleep,  
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,  
The joy, the exultation ? His wan eyes  
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly  
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.  
The spirit of sweet human love has sent  
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned  
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues  
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade  
He overleaps the bounds. Alas ! alas !

Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined  
Thus treacherously ? Lost, lost, for ever lost,  
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,  
That beautiful shape ! Does the dark gate of death  
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,  
O Sleep ? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,  
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,  
Lead only to a black and watery depth,  
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,  
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales  
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,  
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms ?  
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,  
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung  
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held  
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference  
With his still soul. At night the passion came,  
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,  
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth  
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped  
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast  
Burn with the poison, and precipitates  
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and  
cloud,  
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight  
O'er the wide æry wilderness : thus driven  
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,  
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,  
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,  
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,  
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,  
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues  
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on  
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep  
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;  
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs  
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind

Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,  
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,  
Bearing within his life the brooding care  
That ever fed on its decaying flame.  
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair  
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering  
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand  
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;  
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone  
As in a furnace burning secretly  
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,  
Who ministered with human charity  
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe  
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,  
Encountering on some dizzy precipice  
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind  
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet  
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused  
In its career : the infant would conceal  
His troubled visage in his mother's robe  
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,  
To remember their strange light in many a dream  
Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught  
By nature, would interpret half the woe  
That wasted him, would call him with false names  
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand  
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path  
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore  
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste  
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged  
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,  
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.  
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings  
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course  
High over the immeasurable main.  
His eyes pursued its flight.—“ Thou hast a home,

Beautiful bird ; thou voyagest to thine home,  
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck  
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes  
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.  
And what am I that I should linger here,  
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,  
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned  
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers  
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven  
That echoes not my thoughts ? ” A gloomy smile  
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.  
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly  
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,  
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,  
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.  
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight  
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.  
A little shallop floating near the shore  
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.  
It had been long abandoned, for its sides  
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints  
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.  
A restless impulse urged him to embark  
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ;  
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves  
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky  
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind  
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.  
Following his eager soul, the wanderer  
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft  
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,  
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea  
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats  
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds  
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly  
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled  
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,  
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,  
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.  
The waves arose. Higher and higher still  
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge  
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.  
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war  
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast  
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven  
With dark obliterating course, he sate :  
As if their genii were the ministers  
Appointed to conduct him to the light  
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate  
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,  
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues  
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray  
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;  
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,  
Entwined in duskie wreaths her braided locks  
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;  
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side  
More horribly the multitudinous streams  
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war  
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock  
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat  
Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam  
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;  
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;  
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass  
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—  
As if that frail and wasted human form,  
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight  
The moon arose : and lo ! the ætherial cliffs

Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone  
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around  
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves  
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly  
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—  
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—  
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,  
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea,  
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,  
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,  
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there  
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths  
 Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on  
 With unrelaxing speed.—“ Vision and Love ! ”  
 The Poet cried aloud, “ I have beheld  
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death  
 Shall not divide us long ! ”

The boat pursued

The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone  
 At length upon that gloomy river's flow ;  
 Now, where the fiercest war among the waves  
 Is calm, on the unfathomable stream  
 The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,  
 Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,  
 Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell  
 Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound  
 That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass  
 Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;  
 Stair above stair the eddying waters rose  
 Circling immeasurably fast, and laved  
 With alternating dash the gnarled roots  
 Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms  
 In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,  
 Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,  
 A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.  
 Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,  
 With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,  
 Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,

Till on the verge of the extremest curve,  
Where through an opening of the rocky bank,  
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot  
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides  
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink  
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress  
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?  
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,  
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,  
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks  
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,  
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!  
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,  
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.  
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave  
A little space of green expanse, the cove  
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers  
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,  
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave  
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,  
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,  
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay  
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed  
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,  
But on his heart its solitude returned,  
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid  
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame  
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung  
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud  
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods  
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun  
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass  
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence  
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,  
Scooped in the dark base of their æry rocks  
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.  
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves



Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led  
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,  
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,  
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark  
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,  
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,  
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids  
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame  
Most solemn domes within, and far below,  
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,  
The ash and the acacia floating hang  
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed  
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,  
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around  
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,  
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,  
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,  
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs  
Uniting their close union ; the woven leaves  
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,  
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable  
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns  
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,  
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms  
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen  
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,  
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite  
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,  
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep  
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,  
Like vaporous shapes half seen ; beyond, a well,  
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,  
Images all the woven boughs above,  
And each depending leaf, and every speck  
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms ;  
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves  
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star  
Between one foliated lattice twinkling fair,

Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,  
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,  
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings,  
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld  
Their own wan light through the reflected lines  
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth  
Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,  
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,  
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard  
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung  
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel  
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound  
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs  
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed  
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes  
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,  
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords  
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—  
But, undulating woods, and silent well,  
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom  
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming  
Held commune with him, as if he and it  
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard  
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,  
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,  
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles  
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light  
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing  
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet  
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine  
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell  
Among the moss with hollow harmony  
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones  
It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :

Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,  
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud  
That overhung its quietness.—“O stream !,  
Whose source is inaccessiblely profound,  
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?  
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,  
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,  
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course  
Have each their type in me : and the wide sky,  
And measureless ocean may declare as soon  
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud  
Contains thy waters, as the universe  
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched  
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste  
I' the passing wind ! ”

Beside the grassy shore  
Of the small stream he went ; he did impress  
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught  
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one  
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch  
Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,  
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame  
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,  
He must descend. With rapid steps he went  
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow  
Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now  
The forest's solemn canopies were changed  
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.  
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed  
The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae  
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,  
And naught but gnarled roots of ancient pines,  
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots  
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,  
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,  
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin  
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes

Had shone, gleam stony orbs :—so from his steps  
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade  
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds  
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued  
The stream, that with a larger volume now  
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there  
Fretted a path through its descending curves  
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose  
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,  
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles  
In the light of evening, and its precipice  
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,  
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,  
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues  
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands  
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,  
And seems, with its accumulated crags,  
To overhang the world : for wide expand  
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon  
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,  
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom  
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills  
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge  
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,  
In naked and severe simplicity,  
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,  
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy  
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast  
Yielding one only response, at each pause  
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,  
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams  
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,  
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,  
Fell into that immeasurable void  
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine,  
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook

Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,  
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,  
It overlooked in its serenity  
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.  
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile  
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped  
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,  
And did embower with leaves for ever green,  
And berries dark, the smooth and even space  
Of its inviolated floor, and here  
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,  
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,  
Red, yellow, or ætherially pale,  
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt  
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach  
The wilds to love tranquility. One step,  
One human step alone, has ever broken  
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice  
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice  
Which hither came, floating among the winds,  
And led the loveliest among human forms  
To make their wild haunts the depository  
Of all the grace and beauty that endued  
Its motions, render up its majesty,  
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,  
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,  
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,  
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,  
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured  
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge  
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist  
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank  
Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star  
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,  
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice  
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death !

Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night :  
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still  
Guiding its irresistible career  
In thy devastating omnipotence,  
Art king of this frail world, from the red field  
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,  
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed  
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,  
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls  
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey  
He hath prepared, prowling around the world ;  
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men  
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,  
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine  
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess  
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death  
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,  
Did he resign his high and holy soul  
To images of the majestic past,  
That paused within his passive being now,  
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe  
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place  
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk  
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone  
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,  
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink  
Of that obscurest chasm ;—and thus he lay,  
Surrendering to their final impulses  
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,  
The torturers, slept ; no mortal pain or fear  
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,  
And his own being unalloyed by pain,  
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed  
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there  
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight  
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line

Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,  
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed  
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills  
It rests, and still as the divided frame  
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,  
That ever beat in mystic sympathy  
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :  
And when two lessening points of light alone  
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp  
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir  
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray  
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.  
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained  
Utterly black, the murky shades involved  
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,  
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.  
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams  
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west  
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—  
No sense, no motion, no divinity—  
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings  
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream  
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream  
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,  
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,  
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam  
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale  
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance ! O, that God,  
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice  
Which but one living man has drained, who now,  
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels  
No proud exemption in the blighting curse  
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,  
Lone as incarnate death ! O, that the dream  
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,  
Raking the cinders of a crucible

For life and power, even when his feeble hand  
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law  
Of this so lovely world ! But thou art fled  
Like some frail exhalation ; which the dawn  
Robes in its golden beams,—ah ! thou hast fled !  
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,  
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things  
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms  
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth  
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,  
In vespèr low or joyous orison,  
Lifts still its solemn voice :—but thou art fled—  
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes  
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee  
Been purest ministers, who are, alas !  
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips  
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes  
That image sleep in death, upon that form  
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear  
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues  
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,  
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone  
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,  
Let not high verse, mourning the memory  
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe  
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery  
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,  
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain  
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.  
It is a woe too “ deep for tears,” when all  
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,  
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves  
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,  
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;  
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,  
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,  
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.



THE CENCI  
A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

1819



DEDICATION  
TO  
LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience ; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave ; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil ; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit though he must ever confer far more than he can receive ; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew : and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenour of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you !

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, May 29, 1819.

## PREFACE

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for

severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.<sup>1</sup> Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions

<sup>1</sup> The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear* and the two plays in which the tale of Ædipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the *Cenci* is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing

casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification ; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge ; that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true—thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloke to be worn on particular days ; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit ; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits,



a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge ; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci, after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death ; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation ; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.<sup>1</sup>

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly ; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers,

<sup>1</sup> An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon ; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted ; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter ; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art ; it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features : she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate ; the eyebrows are distinct and arched : the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear ; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another : her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent ; and though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GIACOMO, } his Sons  
BERNARDO, }

ORSINO, a Prelate

OLIMPIO, } Assassins  
MARZIO, }

Nobles—Judges—Guards—Servants

LUCRETIA, Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of  
his children

BEATRICE, his Daughter

*The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines*

TIME. *During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.*

# THE CENCI

## ACT I

SCENE I. *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace*

*Enter COUNT CENCI, and CARDINAL CAMILLO*

CAMILLO

THAT matter of the murder is hushed up  
If you consent to yield his Holiness  
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—  
It needed all my interest in the conclave  
To bend him to this point : he said that you  
Bought perilous impunity with your gold ;  
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded  
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell  
An erring soul which might repent and live :—  
But that the glory and the interest  
Of the high throne he fills, little consist  
With making it a daily mart of guilt  
As manifold and hideous as the deeds  
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI

The third of my possessions—let it go !  
Aye, I once heard the nephew of the Pope  
Had sent his architect to view the ground,  
Meaning to build a villa on my vines  
The next time I compounded with his uncle :  
I little thought he should outwit me so !  
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see

That which the vassal threatened to divulge  
 Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.  
 The deed he saw could not have rated higher  
 Than his most worthless life :—it angers me !  
 Respited me from Hell !—So may the Devil  
 Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope  
 Clement,  
 And his most charitable nephews, pray  
 That the Apostle Peter and the saints  
 Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy  
 Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days  
 Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards  
 Of their revenue.—But much yet remains  
 To which they show no title.

## CAMILLO

Oh, Count Cenci !

So much that thou mightst honourably live  
 And reconcile thyself with thine own heart  
 And with thy God, and with the offended world.  
 How hideously look deeds of lust and blood  
 Through those snow-white and venerable hairs !—  
 Your children should be sitting round you now,  
 But that you fear to read upon their looks  
 The shame and misery you have written there.  
 Where is your wife ? Where is your gentle daughter ?  
 Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else  
 Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.  
 Why is she barred from all society  
 But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs ?  
 Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.  
 I stood beside your dark and fiery youth  
 Watching its bold and bad career, as men  
 Watch meteors, but it vanished not—I marked  
 Your desperate and remorseless manhood ; now  
 Do I behold you in dishonoured age,  
 Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.

Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,  
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI

For which Aldobrandino owes you now  
My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,  
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,  
And so we shall converse with less restraint.  
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—  
He was accustomed to frequent my house ;  
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came  
And asked if I had seen him ; and I smiled :  
I think they never saw him any more.

CAMILLO

Thou execrable man, beware !—

CENCI

Of thee ?

Nay, this is idle :—We should know each other.  
As to my character for what men call crime,  
Seeing I please my senses as I list,  
And vindicate that right with force or guile,  
It is a public matter, and I care not  
If I discuss it with you. I may speak  
Alike to you and my own conscious heart—  
For you give out that you have half reformed me,  
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent  
If fear should not ; both will, I do not doubt.  
(All men delight in sensual luxury,  
(All men enjoy revenge ; and most exult  
Over the tortures they can never feel—  
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.  
(But I delight in nothing else. I love  
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,  
When this shall be another's, and that mine.  
And I have no remorse and little fear,

Which are, I think, the checks of other men.  
 This mood has grown upon me, until now  
 Any design my captious fancy makes  
 The picture of its wish, and it forms none  
 But such as men like you would start to know,  
 Is as my natural food and rest debarred  
 Until it be accomplished.

CAMILLO

Art thou not

Most miserable ?

CENCI

Why, miserable ?—

No.—I am what your theologians call  
 Hardened ;—which they must be in impudence,  
 So to reyle a man's peculiar taste.  
 True, I was happier than I am, while yet  
 Manhood remained to act the thing I thought ;  
 While lust was sweeter than revenge ; and now  
 Invention palls :—Aye, we must all grow old—  
 And but that there yet remains a deed to act  
 Whose horror might make sharp an appetite  
 Duller than mine—I'd do,—I know not what.  
 When I was young I thought of nothing else  
 But pleasure ; and I fed on honey sweets :  
 Men, by St. Thomas ! cannot live like bees,  
 And I grew tired :—yet, till I killed a foe,  
 And heard his groans, and heard his children's  
 groans,  
 Knew I not what delight was else on earth,  
 Which now delights me little. I the rather  
 Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals,  
 The dry fixed eyeball ; the pale quivering lip,  
 Which tell me that the spirit weeps within  
 Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.  
 I rarely kill the body, which preserves,  
 Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,



Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear  
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO

Hell's most abandoned fiend  
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,  
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me ;  
I thank my God that I believe you not.

*Enter* ANDREA

ANDREA

My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca  
Would speak with you.

CENCI

Bid him attend me in  
The grand saloon. *[Exit* ANDREA.

CAMILLO

Farewell ; and I will pray  
Almighty God that thy false, impious words  
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee. *[Exit* CAMILLO.

CENCI

The third of my possessions ! I must use  
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,  
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday  
There came an order from the Pope to make  
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons ;  
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,  
Hoping some accident might cut them off ;  
And meaning if I could to starve them there.  
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon  
them !

Bernardo and my wife could not be worse  
If dead and damned :—then, as to Beatrice—

(looking around him suspiciously)

I think they cannot hear me at that door ;  
What if they should ? And yet I need not speak  
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.  
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear  
What now I think ! Thou, pavement, which I  
tread

Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk  
Of my imperious step scorning surprise,  
But not of my intent !—Andrea !

*Enter* ANDREA

ANDREA

My Lord ?

CENCI

Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber  
This evening :—no, at midnight and alone.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A Garden of the Cenci Palace*

*Enter BEATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation*

BEATRICE

Pervert not truth,

Orsino. You remember where we held  
That conversation ;—nay, we see the spot  
Even from this cypress ;—two long years are past  
Since, on an April midnight, underneath  
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,  
I did confess to you my secret mind.

ORSINO

You said you loved me then.

BEATRICE

You are a priest  
Speak to me not of love.

ORSINO

I may obtain  
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.  
Because I am a priest do you believe  
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,  
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep ?

BEATRICE

As I have said, speak to me not of love ;  
Had you a dispensation I have not ;  
Nor will I leave this home of misery  
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady  
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,  
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.  
Alas, Orsino ! All the love that once  
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.  
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first  
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.  
And thus I love you still, but holily,  
Even as a sister or a spirit might ;  
And so I swear a cold fidelity.  
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.  
You have a sly, equivocating vein  
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am !  
Where shall I turn ? Even now you look on me  
As you were not my friend, and as if you  
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles  
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.

Ah ! No, forgive me ; sorrow makes me seem  
 Sterner than else my nature might have been ;  
 I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,  
 And they forbode,—but what can they forbode  
 Worse than I now endure ?

## ORSINO

All will be well.

Is the petition yet prepared ? You know .  
 My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice ;  
 Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill  
 So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

## BEATRICE

Your zeal for all I wish ;—Ah me, you are cold !  
 Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . .  
*(aside)* Alas !  
 Weak and deserted creature that I am,  
 Here I stand bickering with my only friend !  
(To ORSINO)  
 This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,  
 Orsino ; he has heard some happy news  
 From Salamanca, from my brothers there,  
 And with this outward show of love he mocks  
 His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,  
 For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,  
 Which I have heard him pray for on his knees :  
 Great God ! that such a father should be mine !  
 But there is mighty preparation made,  
 And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,  
 And all the chief nobility of Rome.  
 And he has bidden me and my pale Mother  
 Attire ourselves in festival array.  
 Poor lady ! She expects some happy change  
 In his dark spirit from this act ; I none.  
 At supper I will give you the petition :  
 Till when—farewell.

ORSINO

Farewell. *[Exit BEATRICE.]*

I know the Pope

Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow  
 But by absolving me from the revenue  
 Of many a wealthy see ; and, Beatrice,  
 I think to win thee at an easier rate.  
 Nor shall he read her eloquent petition :  
 He might bestow her on some poor relation  
 Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,  
 And I should be debarred from all access.  
 Then as to what she suffers from her father,  
 In all this there is much exaggeration :—  
 Old men are testy and will have their way ;  
 A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,  
 And live a free life as to wine or women,  
 And with a peevish temper may return  
 To a dull home, and rate his wife and children ;  
 Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.  
 I shall be well content if on my conscience  
 There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer  
 From the devices of my love—A net  
 From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear  
 Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,  
 Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve  
 And lay me bare, and make me blush to see  
 My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no ! A friendless girl  
 Who clings to me, as to her only hope :—  
 I were a fool, not less than if a panther  
 Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,  
 If she escape me.

*[Exit.]*

SCENE III. *A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet*

*Enter* CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO,  
CAMILLO, Nobles

CENCI

Welcome, my friends and kinsmen ; welcome ye,  
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,  
Whose presence honours our festivity.  
I have too long lived like an anchorite,  
And in my absence from your merry meetings  
An evil word is gone abroad of me ;  
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,  
When you have shared the entertainment here,  
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,  
And we have pledged a health or two together,  
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you ;  
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,  
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST

In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,  
Too sprightly and companionable a man,  
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.  
(*To his companion*)  
I never saw such blithe and open cheer  
In any eye !

SECOND GUEST

Some most desired event,  
In which we all demand a common joy,  
Has brought us hither ; let us hear it, Count.

CENCI

It is indeed a most desired event.

If when a parent from a parent's heart  
Lifts from this earth to the great father of all  
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,  
And when he rises up from dreaming it ;  
One supplication, one desire, one hope,  
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,  
Even all that he demands in their regard—  
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope,  
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,  
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,  
And task their love to grace his merriment,  
Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

BEATRICE (*to* LUCRETIA)

Great God ! How horrible ! Some dreadful ill  
Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA

Fear not, child,  
He speaks too frankly.

BEATRICE

Ah ! My blood runs cold.  
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,  
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI

Here are the letters brought from Salamanca ;  
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God !  
I thank thee ! In one night didst thou perform,  
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.  
My disobedient and rebellious sons  
Are dead !—Why dead !—What means this change of  
cheer ?  
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead ;  
And they will need no food or raiment more :

The tapers that did light them the dark way  
 Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not  
 Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.  
 Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad.

## BEATRICE

(*LUCRETIA sinks, half fainting ; BEATRICE  
 supports her*)

It is not true !—Dear lady, pray look up.  
 Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,—  
 He would not live to boast of such a boon.  
 Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

## CENCI

Aye, as the word of God ; whom here I call  
 To witness that I speak the sober truth ;—  
 And whose most favouring Providence was shown  
 Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco  
 Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,  
 When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy ;  
 The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano  
 Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,  
 Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival ;  
 All in the self-same hour of the same night ;  
 Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.  
 I beg those friends who love me, that they mark  
 The day a feast upon their calendars.  
 It was the twenty-seventh of December :  
 Aye, read the letters if you doubt my oath.  
 [*The assembly appears confused ; several of the  
 guests rise.*]

## FIRST GUEST

Oh, horrible ! I will depart.—

## SECOND GUEST

And I.—



THIRD GUEST

No, stay !

I do believe it is some jest ; though faith !  
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.  
I think his son has married the Infanta,  
Or found a mine of gold in El dorado ;  
'Tis but to season some such news ; stay, stay !  
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

CENCI

*(filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up)*

Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps  
And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl  
Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,  
To hear the death of my accursèd sons !  
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,  
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,  
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,  
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,  
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls  
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,  
Now triumphs in my triumph !—But thou art  
Superfluous ; I have drunken deep of joy,  
And I will taste no other wine to-night.  
Here, Andrea ! Bear the bowl around.

A GUEST *(rising)*

Thou wretch !

Will none among this noble company  
Check the abandoned villain ?

CAMILLO

For God's sake

Let me dismiss the guests ! You are insane,  
Some ill will come of this.

## SECOND GUEST

Seize, silence him !

## FIRST GUEST

I will !

## THIRD GUEST

And I !

## CENCI

*(addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture)*

Who moves ? Who speaks ?

*(turning to the Company)* 'Tis nothing,

Enjoy yourselves.—Beware ! For my revenge

Is as the sealed commission of a king

That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

*[The Banquet is broken up ; several of the guests  
are departing.]*

## BEATRICE

I do entreat you, go not, noble guests ;

What, although tyranny and impious hate

Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair ?

What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs

Who tortures them, and triumphs ? What, if we

The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,

His children and his wife, whom he is bound

To love and shelter ? Shall we therefore find

No refuge in this merciless wide world ?

Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out

First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,

Till it thus vanquish shame and fear ! O, think !

I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand

Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke

Was perhaps some paternal chastisement !

Have excused much, doubted ; and when no doubt

Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears

To soften him, and when this could not be  
 I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights  
 And lifted up to God, the father of all,  
 Passionate prayers : and when these were not heard  
 I have still borne,—until I meet you here,  
 Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast  
 Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,  
 His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,  
 Ye may soon share such merriment again  
 As fathers make over their children's graves.  
 Oh ! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,  
 Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,  
 Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,  
 Take us away !

## CENCI

*(He has been conversing with CAMILLO during the first  
 part of BEATRICE'S speech ; he hears the conclusion,  
 and now advances)*

I hope my good friends here  
 Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps  
 Of their own throats—before they lend an ear  
 To this wild girl.

BEATRICE *(not noticing the words of CENCI)*

Dare no one look on me ?  
 None answer ? Can one tyrant overbear  
 The sense of many best and wisest men ?  
 Or is it that I sue not in some form  
 Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit ?  
 Oh, God ! That I were buried with my brothers !  
 And that the flowers of this departed spring  
 Were fading on my grave ! And that my father  
 Were celebrating now one feast for all !

## CAMILLO

A bitter wish for one so young and gentle ;  
 Can we do nothing ?

COLONNA

Nothing that I see.

Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy :  
Yet I would second any one.

A CARDINAL

And I.

CENCI

Retire to your chamber, insolent girl !

BEATRICE

Retire thou, impious man ! Aye, hide thyself  
Where never eye can look upon thee more !  
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience  
Who art a torturer ? Father, never dream,  
Though thou mayst overbear this company,  
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me !  
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks  
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat !  
Cover thy face from every living eye,  
And start if thou but hear a human step ;  
Seek out some dark and silent corner,—there,  
Bow thy white head before offended God,  
And we will kneel around, and fervently  
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

CENCI

My friends, I do lament this insane girl  
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.  
Good night, farewell ; I will not make you longer  
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.  
Another time.—

[*Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.*

My brain is swimming round ;  
Give me a bowl of wine ! (To BEATRICE) Thou painted  
viper !

Beast that thou art ! Fair and yet terrible !  
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,  
Now get thee from my sight ! [Exit BEATRICE.

Here, Andrea,  
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said  
I would not drink this evening ; but I must ;  
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail  
With thinking what I have decreed to do.—  
(Drinking the wine)

Be thou the resolution of quick youth  
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,  
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy ;  
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood  
Which I did thirst to drink ! The charm works well ;  
It must be done ; it shall be done, I swear !  
[Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

SCENE I. *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace*

*Enter* LUCRETIA and BERNARDO

LUCRETIA

Weep not, my gentle boy ; he struck but me  
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he  
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.  
O, God Almighty, do thou look upon us,  
We have no other friend but only thee !  
Yet weep not ; though I love you as my own,  
I am not your true mother.

BERNARDO

Oh more, more,  
 Than ever mother was to any child,  
 That have you been to me ! Had he not been  
 My father, do you think that I should weep ?

LUCRETIA

Alas ! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done ?

*Enter BEATRICE*BEATRICE (*in a hurried voice*)

Did he pass this way ? Have you seen him, brother ?  
 Ah ! No, that is his step upon the stairs ;  
 'Tis nearer now ; his hand is on the door ;  
 Mother, if I to thee have ever been  
 A duteous child, now save me ! Thou, great God,  
 Whose image upon earth a father is,  
 Dost thou indeed abandon me ? He comes ;  
 The door is opening now ; I see his face ;  
 He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,  
 Even as he did after the feast last night.

*Enter a Servant*

Almighty God, how merciful thou art !  
 'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news ?

SERVANT

My master bids me say, the Holy Father  
 Has sent back your petition thus unopened.  
(*Giving a paper*)  
 And he demands at what hour 'twere secure  
 To visit you again ?

LUCRETIA

At the Ave Mary. [Exit Servant.]

So, daughter, our last hope has failed ; Ah me !  
How pale you look ; you tremble, and you stand  
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,  
As if one thought were over strong for you :  
Your eyes have a chill glare ; O, dearest child !  
Are you gone mad ? If not, pray speak to me.

BEATRICE

You see I am not mad ; I speak to you.

LUCRETIA

You talked of something that your father did  
After that dreadful feast ? Could it be worse  
Than when he smiled, and cried, My sons are dead !  
And every one looked in his neighbour's face  
To see if others were as white as he ?  
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood  
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance ;  
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild ;  
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words  
Checked his unnatural pride ; and I could see  
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.  
Until this hour thus have you ever stood  
Between us and your father's moody wrath  
Like a protecting presence : your firm mind  
Has been our only refuge and defence :  
What can have thus subdued it ? What can now  
Have given you that cold melancholy look,  
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear ?

BEATRICE

What is it that you say ? I was just thinking  
'Twere better not to struggle any more.

Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,  
 Yet never—O ! Before worse comes of it  
 'Twere wise to die : it ends in that at last.

## LUCRETIA

Oh, talk not so, dear child ! Tell me at once  
 What did your father do or say to you ?  
 He stayed not after that accursèd feast  
 One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

## BERNARDO

Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us !

## BEATRICE

*(speaking very slowly, with a forced calmness)*

It was one word, Mother, one little word ;  
 One look, one smile. *(wildly)*

Oh ! He has trampled me  
 Under his feet, and made the blood stream down  
 My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all  
 Ditch water, and the fever-stricken flesh  
 Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,  
 And we have eaten.—He has made me look  
 On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust  
 Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,  
 And I have never yet despaired—but now !  
 What could I say ? *(recovering herself)*

Ah ! No, 'tis nothing new.  
 The sufferings we all share have made me wild :  
 He only struck and cursed me as he passed ;  
 He said, he looked, he did ;—nothing at all  
 Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.  
 Alas ! I am forgetful of my duty ;  
 I should preserve my senses for your sake.



## LUCRETIA

Nay, Beatrice ; have courage, my sweet girl ;  
If any one despairs it should be I  
Who loved him once, and now must live with him  
Till God in pity call for him or me.  
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,  
And smile, years hence, with children round your  
    knees  
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil  
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

## BEATRICE

Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.  
Did you not nurse me when my mother died ?  
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy ?  
And had we any other friend but you  
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,  
To win our father not to murder us ?  
And shall I now desert you ? May the ghost  
Of my dead mother plead against my soul  
If I abandon her who filled the place  
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love !

## BERNARDO

And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed  
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,  
Even though the Pope should make me free to live  
In some blithe place, like others of my age,  
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.  
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother !

## LUCRETIA

My dear, dear children !

*Enter CENCI, suddenly*

CENCI

What, Beatrice here !  
Come hither ! *(She shrinks back, and covers her face.)*  
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair ;  
Look up ! Why, yesternight you dared to look  
With disobedient insolence upon me,  
Bending a stern and an enquiring brow  
On what I meant ; whilst I then sought to hide  
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

BEATRICE

(wildly, staggering towards the door)  
Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, oh God!

CENCI

Then it was I whose inarticulate words  
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps  
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.  
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour  
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,  
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,  
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,  
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind ;  
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber !  
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,  
(to BERNARDO)  
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate !  
(*Exeunt* BEATRICE and BERNARDO.)  
(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make  
Me bold, her fearful. 'Tis an awful thing  
To touch such mischief as I now conceive :  
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,  
And try the chill stream with their feet ; once in . . .  
How the delighted spirit pants for joy !

LUCRETIA

*(advancing timidly towards him)*.

Oh, husband ! Pray forgive poor Beatrice,—  
She meant not any ill.

CENCI

Nor you perhaps ?

Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote  
Parricide with his alphabet ? Nor Giacomo ?  
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred  
Enmity up against me with the Pope ?  
Whom in one night merciful God cut off :  
Innocent lambs ! They thought not any ill.  
You were not here conspiring ? You said nothing  
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman ;  
Or be condemned to death for some offence,  
And you would be the witnesses ?—This failing,  
How just it were to hire assassins, or  
Put sudden poison in my evening drink ?  
Or smother me when overcome by wine ?  
Seeing we had no other judge but God,  
—And he had sentenced me, and there were none  
But you to be the executioners  
Of his decree enregistered in heaven ?  
Oh, no ! You said not this ?

LUCRETIA

So help me God,  
I never thought the things you charge me with !

CENCI

If you dare speak that wicked lie again  
I'll kill you. What ! It was not by your counsel  
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night ?  
You did not hope to stir some enemies  
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn

What every nerve of you now trembles at ?  
You judged that men were bolder than they are ;  
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA

Look not so dreadfully ! By my salvation  
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed ;  
Nor do I think she designed anything  
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI

Blaspheming liar ! You are damned for this !  
But I will take you where you may persuade  
The stones you tread on to deliver you :  
For men shall there be none but those who dare  
All things—not question that which I command.  
On Wednesday next I shall set out : you know  
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella :  
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about :  
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers  
Never told tales ; though they have heard and seen  
What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you  
linger ?

Make speediest preparation for the journey !

[Exit LUCRETIA.

The all-beholding sun yet shines ; I hear  
A busy stir of men about the streets ;  
I see the bright sky through the window-panes :  
It is a garish, broad, and peering day ;  
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,  
And every little corner, nook and hole  
Is penetrated with the insolent light.  
Come darkness ! Yet, what is the day to me ?  
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do  
A deed which shall confound both night and day ?  
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist  
Of horror : if there be a sun in heaven

She shall not dare to look upon its beams ;  
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night ;  
The act I think shall soon extinguish all  
For me : I bear a darker deadlier gloom  
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,  
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,  
In which I walk secure and unbeheld  
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done !  
[Exit.]

SCENE II. *A Chamber in the Vatican*

*Enter CAMILLO and GIACOMO, in conversation*

CAMILLO

There is an obsolete and doubtful law  
By which you might obtain a bare provision  
Of food and clothing—

GIACOMO

Nothing more? Alas !  
Bare must be the provision which strict law  
Awards, and agèd, sullen avarice pays.  
Why did my father not apprentice me  
To some mechanic trade ? I should have then  
Been trained in no highborn necessities  
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.  
The eldest son of a rich nobleman  
Is heir to all his incapacities ;  
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,  
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once  
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,  
An hundred servants, and six palaces,  
To that which nature doth indeed require ?—

CAMILLO

Nay, there is reason in your plea ; 'twere hard.

GIACOMO

'Tis hard for a firm man to bear : but I  
 Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,  
 Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father  
 Without a bond or witness to the deed :  
 And children, who inherit her fine senses,  
 The fairest creatures in this breathing world ;  
 And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,  
 Do you not think the Pope would interpose  
 And stretch authority beyond the law ?

CAMILLO

Though your peculiar case is hard, I know  
 The Pope will not divert the course of law.  
 After that impious feast the other night  
 I spoke with him, and urged him then to check  
 Your father's cruel hand ; he frowned and said,  
 " Children are disobedient, and they sting  
 Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,  
 Requiring years of care with contumely.  
 I pity the Count Cenci from my heart ;  
 His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,  
 And thus he is exasperated to ill.  
 In the great war between the old and young  
 I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,  
 Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

*Enter ORSINO*

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO

What words ?

GIACOMO

Alas, repeat them not again !

There then is no redress for me, at least  
None but that which I may achieve myself,  
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,  
My innocent sister and my only brother  
Are dying underneath my father's eye.  
The memorable torturers of this land,  
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,  
Never inflicted on the meanest slave  
What these endure ; shall they have no protection ?

CAMILLO

Why, if they would petition to the Pope  
I see not how he could refuse it—yet  
He holds it of most dangerous example  
In aught to weaken the paternal power,  
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.  
I pray you now excuse me. I have business  
That will not bear delay. [Exit CAMILLO.]

GIACOMO

But you, Orsino,  
Have the petition : wherefore not present it ?

ORSINO

I have presented it, and backed it with  
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest ;  
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not  
But that the strange and execrable deeds  
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle  
Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure  
Upon the accusers from the criminal :  
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO

My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold

Has whispered silence to his Holiness :  
 And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.  
 What should we do but strike ourselves to death ?  
 For he who is our murderous persecutor  
 Is shielded by a father's holy name,  
 Or I would— *(Stops abruptly.)*

## ORSINO

What ? Fear not to speak your thought.  
 Words are but holy as the deeds they cover :  
 A priest who has forsworn the God he serves ;  
 A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree ;  
 A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,  
 But as the mantle of some selfish guile ;  
 A father who is all a tyrant seems,  
 Were the profaner for his sacred name.

## GIACOMO

Ask me not what I think ; the unwilling brain  
 Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust  
 Imagination with such phantasies  
 As the tongue dares not fashion into words,—  
 Which have no words,—their horror makes them dim  
 To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself  
 To think what you demand.

## ORSINO

But a friend's bosom  
 Is as the inmost cave of our own mind  
 Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,  
 And from the all-communicating air.  
 You look what I suspected—

## GIACOMO

Spare me now !  
 I am as one lost in a midnight wood,



Who dares not ask some harmless passenger  
The path across the wilderness, lest he,  
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer:  
I know you are my friend, and all I dare  
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.  
But now my heart is heavy, and would take  
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.  
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell !  
I would that to my own suspected self  
I could address a word so full of peace.

ORSINO

Farewell !—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

[Exit GIACOMO.]

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo  
To feed his hope with cold encouragement :  
It fortunately serves my close designs  
That 'tis a trick of this same family  
To analyse their own and other minds.  
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will  
Dangerous secrets : for it tempts our powers,  
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,  
Into the depth of darkest purposes :  
So Cenci fell into the pit ; even I,  
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,  
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,  
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,  
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do  
As little mischief as I can ; that thought  
Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(after a pause) Now what harm  
If Cenci should be murdered ?—Yet, if murdered,  
Wherefore by me ? And what if I could take  
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril  
In such an action ? Of all earthly things  
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words ;  
And such is Cenci : and while Cenci lives

His daughter's dowry were a secret grave  
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice !  
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee  
Could but despise danger and gold and all  
That frowns between my wish and its effect,  
Or smiles beyond it ! There is no escape. . . .  
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,  
And follows me to the resort of men,  
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,  
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire ;  
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head  
My hot palm scorches it : her very name,  
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart  
Sicken and pant ; and thus unprofitably  
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights  
Till weak imagination half possesses  
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer  
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours :  
From the unravell'd hopes of Giacomo  
I must work out my own dear purposes.  
I see, as from a tower, the end of all :  
Her father dead ; her brother bound to me  
By a dark secret, surer than the grave ;  
Her mother scared and unexpostulating  
From the dread manner of her wish achieved :  
And she !—Once more take courage, my faint heart ;  
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee ?  
I have such foresight as assures success :  
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,  
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds  
To black suggestions ; and he prospers best,  
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,  
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes  
Its empire and its prey of other hearts  
Till it become his slave . . . as I will do. [Exit.]

## ACT III

SCENE I. *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace*LUCRETIA, *to her enter* BEATRICE

BEATRICE

*(She enters staggering, and speaks wildly)*

Reach me that handkerchief !—My brain is hurt ;  
My eyes are full of blood ; just wipe them for me. . . .  
I see but indistinctly. . . .

LUCRETIA

My sweet child,  
You have no wound ; 'tis only a cold dew  
That starts from your dear brow. . . . Alas ! Alas !  
What has befallen ?

BEATRICE

How comes this hair undone ?  
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,  
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible !  
The pavement sinks under my feet ! The walls  
Spin round ! I see a woman weeping there,  
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I  
Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God !  
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood !  
The sunshine on the floor is black ! The air  
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe  
In charnel pits ! Pah ! I am choked ! There creeps  
A clinging, black, contaminating mist  
About me . . . 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,  
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues  
My fingers and my limbs to one another,  
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves  
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning

The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life !  
 My God ! I never knew what the mad felt  
 Before ; for I am mad beyond all doubt !  
 (*More wildly.*) No, I am dead ! These putrefying limbs  
 Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul  
 Which would burst forth into the wandering air ! (*a pause*)  
 What hideous thought was that I had even now ?  
 'Tis gone ; and yet its burthen remains here  
 O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart !  
 O, world ! O, life ! O, day ! O, misery !

## LUCRETIA

What ails thee, my poor child ? She answers not :  
 Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,  
 But not its cause ; suffering has dried away  
 The source from which it sprung. . . .

BEATRICE (*frantically*)

Like Parricide . . .  
 Misery has killed its father : yet its father  
 Never like mine. . . . O, God ! What thing am I ?

## LUCRETIA

My dearest child, what has your father done ?

BEATRICE (*doubtfully*)

Who art thou, questioner ? I have no father.  
 (*Aside.*) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,  
 It is a piteous office.  
 (*To LUCRETIA, in a slow, subdued voice.*) Do you know  
 I thought I was that wretched Beatrice  
 Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales  
 From hall to hall by the entangled hair ;  
 At others, pens up naked in damp cells  
 Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,  
 Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story

So did I overact in my sick dreams,  
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be !  
Horrible things have been in this wild world,  
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange  
Of good and ill ; and worse have been conceived  
Than ever there was found a heart to do.  
But never fancy imaged such a deed  
As . . . (*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*)  
Who art thou ? Swear to me, ere I die  
With fearful expectation, that indeed  
Thou art not what thou seemest . . . Mother !

LUCRETIA

Oh !

My sweet child, know you . . .

BEATRICE

Yet speak it not :  
For then if this be truth, that other too  
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,  
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,  
Never to change, never to pass away.  
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace ;  
Thou art Lucretia ; I am Beatrice.  
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.  
Mother, come near me : from this point of time,  
I am . . . (*Her voice dies away faintly.*)

LUCRETIA

Alas ! What has befallen thee, child ?  
What has thy father done ?

BEATRICE

What have I done ?  
Am I not innocent ? Is it my crime  
That one with white hair, and imperious brow,

Who tortured me from my forgotten years,  
As parents only dare, should call himself  
My father, yet should be !—Oh, what am I ?  
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine ?  
What retrospects, outliving even despair ?

## LUCRETIA

He is a violent tyrant, surely, child :  
We know that death alone can make us free ;  
His death or ours. But what can he have done  
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury ?  
Thou art unlike thyself ; thine eyes shoot forth  
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,  
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine  
With one another.

## BEATRICE

'Tis the restless life  
Tortured within them. If I try to speak  
I shall go mad. Aye, something must be done ;  
What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make  
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow  
In the dread lightning which avenges it ;  
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying  
The consequence of what it cannot cure.  
Some such thing is to be endured or done :  
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,  
And never anything will move me more.  
But now !—Oh blood, which art my father's blood,  
Circling through these contaminated veins,  
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,  
Could wash away the crime, and punishment  
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be !  
Many might doubt there were a God above  
Who sees and permits evil, and so die :  
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

## LUCRETIA

It must indeed have been some bitter wrong ;  
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,  
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief  
Thy sufferings from my fear.

## BEATRICE

I hide them not.  
What are the words which you would have me speak ?  
I, who can feign no image in my mind  
Of that which has transformed me : I, whose thought  
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up  
In its own formless horror : of all words,  
That minister to mortal intercourse,  
Which wouldst thou hear ? For there is none to tell  
My misery : if another ever knew  
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,  
And left it, as I must, without a name.  
Death ! Death ! Our law and our religion call thee  
A punishment and a reward. . . . Oh, which  
Have I deserved ?

## LUCRETIA

The peace of innocence ;  
Till in your season you be called to heaven.  
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done  
No evil. Death must be the punishment  
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down  
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path  
Which leads to immortality.

## BEATRICE

Aye, death . . .  
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,  
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.  
If I must live day after day, and keep

These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,  
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest  
May mock thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be!  
Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,  
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between  
Our will and it :—O ! In this mortal world  
There is no vindication and no law  
Which can adjudge and execute the doom  
Of that through which I suffer.

*Enter ORSINO*

*(She approaches him solemnly.)* Welcome, Friend !  
I have to tell you that, since last we met,  
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,  
That neither life nor death can give me rest.  
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds  
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO

And what is he who has thus injured you ?

BEATRICE

The man they call my father : a dread name.

ORSINO

It cannot be. . . .

BEATRICE

What it can be, or not,  
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been ;  
Advise me how it shall not be again.  
I thought to die ; but a religious awe  
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself  
Might be no refuge from the consciousness  
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak !



ORSINO

Accuse him of the deed, and let the law  
Avenge thee.

BEATRICE

Oh, ice-hearted counsellor !  
If I could find a word that might make known  
The crime of my destroyer ; and that done,  
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret  
Which cankers my heart's core ; aye, lay all bare  
So that my unpolluted fame should be  
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story ;  
A mock, a bye-word, an astonishment :—  
If this were done, which never shall be done,  
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,  
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,  
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech ;  
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped  
In hideous hints. . . . Oh, most assured redress !

ORSINO

You will endure it then ?

BEATRICE

Endure ?—Orsino,  
It seems your counsel is small profit.  
(*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.*) Aye,  
All must be suddenly resolved and done.  
What is this undistinguishable mist  
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,  
Darkening each other ?

ORSINO

Should the offender live ?  
Triumph in his misdeed ? and make, by use,  
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,  
Thine element ; until thou mayest become  
Utterly lost ; subdued even to the hue  
Of that which thou permittest ?

BEATRICE (*to herself*)

Mighty death !

Thou double-visaged shadow ! Only judge !  
 Rightfullest arbiter ! (*She retires absorbed in thought.*)

LUCRETIA

If the lightning

Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . .

ORSINO

Blasphe<sup>m</sup>e not ! His high Providence commits  
 Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs  
 Into the hands of men ; if they neglect  
 To punish crime . . .

LUCRETIA

But if one, like this wretch,  
 Should mock with gold, opinion, law and power ?  
 If there be no appeal to that which makes  
 The guiltiest tremble ? If because our wrongs,  
 For that they are unnatural, strange and monstrous,  
 Exceed all measure of belief ? Oh, God !  
 If, for the very reasons which should make  
 Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs ?  
 And we, the victims, bear worse punishment  
 Than that appointed for their torturer ?

ORSINO

Think not

But that there is redress where there is wrong,  
 So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA

How ?

If there were any way to make all sure,  
 I know not . . . but I think it might be good  
 To . . .

ORSINO

Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;  
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,  
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her  
Only one duty, how she may avenge :  
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured ;  
Me, but one counsel . . .

LUCRETIA

For we cannot hope  
That aid, or retribution, or resource  
Will arise thence, where every other one  
Might find them with less need.

(BEATRICE *advances.*)

ORSINO

Then . . .

BEATRICE

Peace, Orsino !

And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,  
That you put off, as garments overworn,  
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,  
And all the fit restraints of daily life,  
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now  
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.  
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,  
Which, though it be expressionless, is such  
As asks atonement ; both for what is past,  
And lest I be reserved, day after day,  
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,  
And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed  
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,  
And have unravelled my entangled will,  
And have at length determined what is right.  
Art thou my friend, Orsino ? False or true ?  
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

ORSINO

I swear  
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,  
My silence, and whatever else is mine,  
To thy commands.

LUCRETIA

You think we should devise  
His death ?

BEATRICE

And execute what is devised,  
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

ORSINO

And yet most cautious.

LUCRETIA

For the jealous laws  
Would punish us with death and infamy  
For that which it became themselves to do.

BEATRICE

Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,  
What are the means ?

ORSINO

I know two dull, fierce outlaws,  
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they  
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,  
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood  
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell  
What we now want.

LUCRETIA

To-morrow before dawn,  
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,  
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.  
If he arrive there . . .

BEATRICE  
He must not arrive.

ORSINO  
Will it be dark before you reach the tower ?

LUCRETIA  
The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE  
But I remember  
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road  
Crosses a deep rayine ; 'tis rough and narrow,  
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;  
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,  
Which has, from unimaginable years,  
Sustained itself with terror and with toil  
Over a gulph, and with the agony  
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;  
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour  
Clings to the mass of life ; yet clinging, leans ;  
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss  
In which it fears to fall : beneath this crag  
~~Huge as despair~~, as if in weariness,  
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,  
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent  
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge  
Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow,  
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,  
Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair  
Is matted in one solid roof of shade  
By the dark ivy's twine. At noon-day here  
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

ORSINO  
Before you reach that bridge make some excuse  
For spurring on your mules, or loitering  
Until . . .

BEATRICE

What sound is that ?

LUCRETIA

Hark ! No, it cannot be a servant's step ;  
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly  
Returned. . . . Make some excuse for being here.

BEATRICE (*to ORSINO, as she goes out*)

That step we hear approach must never pass  
The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

ORSINO

What shall I do ?

Cenci must find me here, and I must bear  
The imperious inquisition of his looks  
As to what brought me hither : let me mask  
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

*Enter GIACOMO, in a hurried manner*

How ! Have you ventured hither ? Know you then  
That Cenci is from home ?

GIACOMO

I sought him here ;  
And now must wait till he returns.

ORSINO

Great God !  
Weigh you the danger of this rashness ?

GIACOMO

Aye !  
Does my destroyer know his danger ? We  
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,

But man to man ; the oppressor to the oppressed ;  
The slanderer to the slandered ; foe to foe :  
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,  
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame ;  
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat  
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold ;  
I ask not happy years ; nor memories  
Of tranquil childhood ; nor home-sheltered love ;  
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more ;  
But only my fair fame ; only one hoard  
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,  
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,  
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon ;  
Why should I speak with man ?

ORSINO

Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO

Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.  
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,  
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,  
And then denied the loan ; and left me so  
In poverty, the which I sought to mend  
By holding a poor office in the state.  
It had been promised to me, and already  
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,  
And my wife smiled ; and my heart knew repose.  
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,  
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus  
He paid for vilest service. I returned  
With this ill news, and we sate sad together  
Solacing our despondency with tears  
Of such affection and unbroken faith  
As temper life's worst bitterness ; when he,  
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,  
Mocking our poverty, and telling us  
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.

And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,  
I spoke of my wife's dowry ; but he coined  
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted  
The sum in secret riot ; and he saw  
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.  
And when I knew the impression he had made,  
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn  
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,  
I went forth too : but soon returned again ;  
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught  
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,  
" Give us clothes, father ! Give us better food !  
What you in one night squander were enough  
For months ! " I looked, and saw that home was hell.  
And to that hell will I return no more  
Until mine enemy has rendered up  
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me  
I will, reversing nature's law . . .

ORSINO

Trust me,  
The compensation which thou seekest here  
Will be denied.

GIACOMO

Then . . . Are you not my friend ?  
Did you not hint at the alternative,  
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,  
The other day when we conversed together ?  
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,  
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

ORSINO

It must be fear itself, for the bare word  
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God  
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,  
So sanctifying it : what you devise  
Is, as it were, accomplished.



GIACOMO

Is he dead ?

ORSINO

His grave is ready. Know that since we met  
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

GIACOMO

What outrage ?

ORSINO

That she speaks not, but you may  
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,  
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief  
Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,  
And her severe unmodulated voice,  
Drowning both tenderness and dread ; and last  
From this ; that whilst her step-mother and I,  
Bewildered in our horror, talked together  
With obscure hints, both self-misunderstood  
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,  
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,  
She interrupted us, and with a look  
Which told before she spoke it, he must die

GIACOMO

It is enough. My doubts are well appeased ;  
There is a higher reason for the act  
Than mine ; there is a holier judge than me,  
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,  
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth  
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised  
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it  
With needless tears ! Fair sister, thou in whom  
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom  
Did not destroy each other ! Is there made  
Ravage of thee ? O, heart, I ask no more  
Justification ! Shall I wait, Orsino,  
Till he return, and stab him at the door ?

ORSINO

Not so ; some accident might interpose  
 To rescue him from what is now most sure ;  
 And you are unprovided where to fly,  
 How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen :  
 All is contrived ; success is so assured  
 That . . .

*Enter* BEATRICE

BEATRICE

'Tis my brother's voice ! You know me not ?

GIACOMO

My sister, my lost sister !

BEATRICE

Lost indeed !

I see Orsino has talked with you, and  
 That you conjecture things too horrible  
 To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,  
 He might return : yet kiss me ; I shall know  
 That then thou hast consented to his death.  
 Farewell, farewell ! Let piety to God,  
 Brotherly love, justice and clemency,  
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts  
 Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell.  
*[Exeunt severally.]*

SCENE II. *A mean apartment in* GIACOMO'S  
*House. GIACOMO alone*

GIACOMO

'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.  
*(Thunder, and the sound of a storm.)*  
 What ! can the everlasting elements  
 Feel with a worm like man ? If so the shaft

Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall  
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep :  
They are now living in unmeaning dreams :  
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed  
Be just which was most necessary. O,  
Thou unreplenished lamp ! whose narrow fire  
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge  
Devouring darkness hovers ! Thou small flame,  
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,  
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,  
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be  
As thou hadst never been ! So wastes and sinks  
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine :  
But that no power can fill with vital oil,  
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha ! 'tis the blood  
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold :  
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks  
Into the white and yellow spasms of death :  
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed  
In God's immortal likeness which now stands  
Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat !

(*A bell strikes.*) One ! Two !

The hours crawl on ; and when my hairs are white,  
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,  
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse ;  
Chiding the tardy messenger of news  
Like those which I expect. I almost wish  
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great ;  
Yet . . . 'tis Orsino's step . . .

*Enter ORSINO*

Speak !

ORSINO

I am come

To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO

Escaped !

ORSINO

And safe  
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot  
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

GIACOMO

Are we the fools of such contingencies ?  
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus  
The hours when we should act ? Then wind and  
thunder,  
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter  
With which Heaven mocks our weakness ! I hence-  
forth  
Will ne'er repent of ~~La~~ught designed or done  
But my repentance.

ORSINO

See, the lamp is out.

GIACOMO

If no remorse is ours when the dim air  
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail  
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits  
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever ?  
No, I am hardened.

ORSINO

Why, what need of this ?  
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse  
In a just deed ? Although our first plan failed,  
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.  
But light the lamp ; let us not talk i' the dark.

GIACOMO (*lighting the lamp*)

And yet once quenched I cannot thus relume  
My father's life : do you not think his ghost  
Might plead that argument with God ?

ORSINO

Once gone

You cannot now recall your sister's peace ;  
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope ;  
Nor your wife's bitter words ; nor all the taunts  
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes ;  
Nor your dead mother ; nor . . .

GIACOMO

O, speak no more !

I am resolved, although this very hand  
Must quench the life that animated it.

ORSINO

There is no need of that. Listen : you know  
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella  
In old Colonna's time ; him whom your father  
Degraded from his post ? And Marzio,  
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year  
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due ?

GIACOMO

I knew Olimpio ; and they say he hated  
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage  
His lips grew white only to see him pass.  
Of Marzio I know nothing.

ORSINO

Marzio's hate

Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,  
But in your name, and as at your request,  
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

GIACOMO

Only to talk ?

ORSINO

The moments which even now  
 Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour  
 May memorize their flight with death : ere then  
 They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,  
 And made an end. . . .

GIACOMO

Listen ! What sound is that ?

ORSINO

The house-dog moans, and the beams crack : naught else.

GIACOMO

It is my wife complaining in her sleep :  
I doubt not she is saying bitter things  
Of me ; and all my children round her dreaming  
That I deny them sustenance.

ORSINO

Whilst he  
Who truly took it from them, and who fills  
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps  
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly  
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate  
Too like the truth of day.

GIACOMO

If e'er he wakes

Again, I will not trust to hireling hands. . .

## ORSINO

Why, that were well. I must be gone ; good night :  
When next we meet—may all be done !

GIACOMO

Forgotten : Oh, that I had never been !                      And all  
[*Exeunt.*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I. *An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella*

*Enter CENCI*

CENCI

She comes not ; yet I left her even now  
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty  
Of her delay : yet what if threats are vain ?  
Am I not now within Petrella's moat ?  
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome ?  
Might I not drag her by the golden hair ?  
Stamp on her ? Keep her sleepless till her brain  
Be overworn ? Tame her with chains and famine ?  
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone  
What I most seek ! No, tis her stubborn will  
Which by its own consent shall stoop as low  
As that which drags it down.

*Enter LUCRETIA*

Thou loathèd wretch !  
Hide thee from my abhorrence ; fly, begone !  
Yet stay ! Bid Beatrice come hither.

LUCRETIA

Oh,  
Husband ! I pray for thine own wretched sake  
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee  
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,  
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.  
And thou art old ; thy hairs are hoary-grey ;  
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,  
Pity thy daughter ; give her to some friend  
In marriage : so that she may tempt thee not  
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

## CENCI

What ! like her sister who has found a home .  
 To mock my hate from with prosperity ?  
 Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee  
 And all that yet remain. My death may be  
 Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,  
 Bid her come hither, and before my mood  
 Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

## LUCRETIA

She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence  
 She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance ;  
 And in that trance she heard a voice which said,  
 " Cenci must die ! Let him confess himself !  
 Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear  
 If God, to punish his enormous crimes,  
 Harden his dying heart ! "

## CENCI

Why—such things are . . .  
 No doubt divine revealings may be made.  
 'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,  
 For when I cursed my sons they died.—Aye . . . so . . .  
 As to the right or wrong that's talk . . . repentance . . .  
 Repentance is an easy moment's work  
 And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .  
 I must give up the greater point, which was  
 To poison and corrupt her soul.

*(A pause ; LUCRETIA approaches anxiously, and  
 then shrinks back as he speaks.)*

One, two ;

Aye . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse  
 Strangled : and Giacomo, I think, will find  
 Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave :  
 Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,  
 Die in despair, blaspheming : to Bernardo,



He is so innocent, I will bequeath  
 The memory of these deeds, and make his youth  
 The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts  
 Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.  
 When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,  
 I will pile up my silver and my gold ;  
 My costly robes, paintings and tapestries ;  
 My parchments and all records of my wealth,  
 And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave  
 Of my possessions nothing but my name ;  
 Which shall be an inheritance to strip  
 Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,  
 My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign  
 Into the hands of him who wielded it ;  
 Be it for its own punishment or theirs,  
 He will not ask it of me till the lash  
 Be broken in its last and deepest wound ;  
 Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,  
 Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make  
 Short work and sure . . . (Going.)

LUCRETIA (*stops him*)

Oh, stay ! It was a feint :  
 She had no vision, and she heard no voice.  
 I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI

That is well.  
 Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,  
 Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie !  
 For Beatrice worse terrors are in store  
 To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA

Oh ! to what will ?  
 What cruel sufferings more than she has known  
 Canst thou inflict ?

CENCI

Andrea ! go call my daughter,  
 And if she comes not tell her that I come.  
 What sufferings ? I will drag her, step by step,  
 Through infamies unheard of among men :  
 She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon  
 Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,  
 One among which shall be . . . What ? Canst thou  
 guess ?

She shall become, (for what she most abhors  
 Shall have a fascination to entrap  
 Her loathing will,) to her own conscious self  
 All she appears to others ; and when dead,  
 As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,  
 A rebel to her father and her God,  
 Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds ;  
 Her name shall be the terror of the earth ;  
 Her spirit shall approach the throne of God  
 Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make  
 Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

*Enter* ANDREA

ANDREA

The Lady Beatrice . . .

CENCI

Said she ?  
 Speak, pale slave ! What

ANDREA

My Lord, 'twas what she looked ; she said  
 "Go tell my father that I see the gulph  
 Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,  
 I will not."  
[Exit ANDREA.]

CENCI

Go thou quick, Lucretia,

Tell her to come ; yet let her understand  
Her coming is consent : and say, moreover,  
That if she come not I will curse her.

[Exit LUCRETIA.

Ha !

With what but with a father's curse doth God  
Panic-strike armed victory, and make pale  
Cities in their prosperity ? The world's Father  
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child  
Be he who asks even what men call me.  
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers  
Awe her before I speak ? For I on them  
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA

Well ; what ? Speak, wretch !

LUCRETIA

She said, " I cannot come ;  
Go tell my father that I see a torrent  
Of his own blood raging between us."

CENCI (*kneeling*)

God !

Hear me ! If this most specious mass of flesh,  
Which thou hast made my daughter ; this my blood,  
This particle of my divided being ;  
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,  
Whose sight infects and poisons me ; this devil  
Which, sprung from me as from a hell, was meant  
To aught good use ; if her bright loveliness  
Was kindled to illumine this dark world ;  
If nursed by thy selectest dew of love  
Such virtues blossom in her as should make  
The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,  
As thou the common God and Father art  
Of her, and me, and all ; reverse that doom !

Earth, in the name of God, let her food be  
 Poison, until she be encrusted round  
 With lepróus stains ! Heaven, rain upon her head  
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,  
 Till she be speckled like a toad ; parch up  
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs  
 To loathèd lameness ! All-beholding sun,  
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes  
 With thine own blinding beams !

LUCRETIA

Peace ! Peace !

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.  
 When high God grants he punishes such prayers.

CENCI

*(leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards  
 Heaven)*

He does his will, I mine ! This in addition,  
 That if she have a child . . .

LUCRETIA

Horrible thought !

CENCI

That if she ever have a child ; and thou,  
 Quick Nature ! I adjure thee by thy God,  
 That thou be fruitful in her, and increase  
 And multiply, fulfilling his command,  
 And my deep imprecation ! May it be  
 A hideous likeness of herself, that as  
 From a distorting mirror, she may see  
 Her image mixed with what she most abhors,  
 Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.  
 And that the child may from its infancy  
 Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,  
 Turning her mother's love to misery :

And that both she and it may live until  
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,  
Or what may else be more unnatural  
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs  
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.  
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,  
Before my words are chronicled in heaven.

[Exit LUCRETIA.

I do not feel as if I were a man,  
But like a fiend appointed to chastise  
The offences of some unremembered world.  
My blood is running up and down my veins;  
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:  
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;  
My heart is beating with an expectation  
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA

What? Speak!

LUCRETIA

She bids thee curse;  
And if thy curses, as they cannot do  
Could kill her soul . . .

CENCI

She would not come. 'Tis well,  
I can do both: first take what I demand,  
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!  
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night  
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer  
To come between the tiger and his prey.

[Exit LUCRETIA.

It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim  
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.  
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!  
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,

Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain  
 Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go  
 First to belie thee with an hour of rest,  
 Which will be deep and calm, I feel : and then . . .  
 O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake  
 Thine arches with the laughter of their joy !  
 There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven  
 As o'er an angel fallen ; and upon Earth  
 All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things  
 Shall with a spirit of unnatural life  
 Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II. *Before the Castle of Petrella*

*Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA above  
 on the Ramparts*

BEATRICE

They come not yet.

LUCRETIA

'Tis scarce midnight.

BEATRICE

How slow  
 Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,  
Lags leaden-footed time !

LUCRETIA

The minutes pass . . .  
 If he should wake before the deed is done ?

BEATRICE

O, Mother ! He must never wake again.  
 What thou hast said persuades me that our act

Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell  
Out of a human form.

LUCRETIA

'Tis true he spoke  
Of death and judgment with strange confidence  
For one so wicked ; as a man believing  
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.  
And yet to die without confession ! . . .

BEATRICE

Oh !

Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,  
And will not add our dread necessity  
To the amount of his offences.

*Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO below*

LUCRETIA

See,

They come.

BEATRICE

All mortal things must hasten thus  
To their dark end. Let us go down.

*[Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE from above.]*

OLIMPIO

How feel you to this work ?

MARZIO

As one who thinks  
A thousand crowns excellent market price  
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

OLIMPIO

It is the white reflexion of your own,  
Which you call pale.

MARZIO

Is that their natural hue ?

OLIMPIO

Or 'tis my hate and the deferred desire  
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

MARZIO

You are inclined then to this business ?

OLIMPIO

Aye.

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns  
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,  
I could not be more willing.

*Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA below*  
Noble ladies !

BEATRICE

Are ye resolved ?

OLIMPIO

Is he asleep ?

MARZIO

Is all

Quiet ?

LUCRETIA

I mixed an opiate with his drink :  
He sleeps so soundly . . .

BEATRICE

That his death will be

But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,  
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,



Which God extinguish ! But ye are resolved ?  
Ye know it is a high and holy deed ?

OLIMPIO

We are resolved.

MARZIO

As to the how this act  
Be warranted, it rests with you.

BEATRICE

Well, follow !

OLIMPIO

Hush ! Hark ! What noise is that ?

MARZIO

Ha ! some one comes !

BEATRICE

Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest  
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,  
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,  
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow !  
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *An Apartment in the Castle*

*Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA*

LUCRETIA

They are about it now.

BEATRICE

Nay, it is done.

LUCRETIA

I have not heard him groan.

BEATRICE

He will not groan

LUCRETIA

What sound is that ?

BEATRICE

List ! 'tis the tread of feet

About his bed.

LUCRETIA

My God !

If he be now a cold stiff corpse . . .

BEATRICE

O, fear not

What may be done, but what is left undone :

The act seals all.

*Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO*

Is it accomplished ?

MARZIO

What ?

OLIMPIO

Did you not call ?

BEATRICE

When ?

OLIMPIO

Now.

BEATRICE

I ask if all is over ?

OLIMPIO

We dare not kill an old and sleeping man ;  
 His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,  
 His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,  
 And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,  
 Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

MARZIO

But I was bolder ; for I chid Olimpio,  
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave  
And leave me the reward. And now my knife  
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man  
Stirred in his sleep, and said, " God ! hear, O, hear,  
A father's curse ! What, art thou not our father ? "  
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost  
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,  
And could not kill him.

BEATRICE

Miserable slaves !

Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,  
Found ye the boldness to return to me  
With such a deed undone ? Base palterers !  
Cowards and traitors ! Why, the very conscience  
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge  
Is an equivocation : it sleeps over  
A thousand daily acts disgracing men ;  
And when a deed where mercy insults heaven . . .  
Why do I talk ?

*(Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.)*

Hadst thou a tongue to say,  
She murdered her own father, I must do it !  
But never dream ye shall outlive him long !

OLIMPIO

Stop, for God's sake !

MARZIO

I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO

Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

BEATRICE

Take it ! Depart ! Return !

*[Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.]*

How pale thou art !  
 We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime  
 To leave undone.

LUCRETIA

Would it were done !

BEATRICE

Even whilst  
 That doubt is passing through your mind, the world  
 Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell  
 Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth  
 To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath  
 Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood  
 Runs freely through my veins. Hark !

*Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO*

He is . . .

OLIMPIO

Dead !

MARZIO

We strangled him that there might be no blood ;  
 And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden  
 Under the balcony ; 'twill seem it fell.

BEATRICE (*giving them a bag of coin*)

Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.  
 And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed  
 By that which made me tremble, wear thou this !

(*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*)

It was the mantle which my grandfather  
 Wore in his high prosperity, and men  
 Envied his state : so may they envy thine.  
 Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God  
 To a just use. Live long and thrive ! And, mark,  
 If thou hast crimes, repent : this deed is none.

(*A horn is sounded.*)

LUCRETIA

Hark, 'tis the castle horn ; my God ! it sounds  
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE

Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA

The drawbridge is let down ; there is a tramp  
Of horses in the court ; fly, hide yourselves !

[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO and MARZIO.]

BEATRICE

Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest ;  
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now :  
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs  
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep  
Fearless and calm : all ill is surely past.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *Another Apartment in the Castle*

*Enter on one side the Legate SAVELLA, introduced by a  
Servant, and on the other LUCRETIA and BERNARDO*

SAVELLA

Lady, my duty to his Holiness  
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably  
I break upon your rest. I must speak with  
Count Cenci ; doth he sleep ?

LUCRETIA

(*in a hurried and confused manner*)

I think he sleeps ;  
Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,  
He is a wicked and a wrathful man ;

Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,  
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,  
It were not well ; indeed it were not well.  
Wait till day break . . . (*Aside.*) O, I am deadly sick !

SAVELLA

I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count  
Must answer charges of the gravest import,  
And suddenly ; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA (*with increased agitation*)

I dare not rouse him : I know none who dare. . . .  
'Twere perilous ; . . . you might as safely waken  
A serpent ; or a corpse in which some fiend  
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA

Lady, my moments here  
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,  
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA (*aside*)

O, terror ! O, despair !  
(*To Bernardo.*) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord  
Legate to  
Your father's chamber.

[*Exeunt SAVELLA and BERNARDO.*]

*Enter* BEATRICE

-- BEATRICE

'Tis a messenger  
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands  
Before the throne of unappealable God.  
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,  
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA

Oh, agony of fear !  
Would that he yet might live ! Even now I heard

The Legate's followers whisper as they passed  
 They had a warrant for his instant death.  
 All was prepared by unforbidden means  
 Which we must pay so dearly, having done.  
 Even now they search the tower, and find the body ;  
 Now they suspect the truth ; now they consult  
 Before they come to tax us with the fact ;  
 O, horrible, 'tis all discovered !

BEATRICE

Mother,  
 What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold  
 As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child  
 To fear that others know what thou hast done,  
 Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus  
 Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks  
 All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,  
 And fear no other witness but thy fear.  
 For if, as cannot be, some circumstance  
 Should rise in accusation, we can blind  
 Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,  
 Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,  
 As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,  
 And what may follow now regards not me.  
 I am as universal as the light ;  
 Free as the earth-surrounding air ; as firm  
 As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,  
 Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock  
 But shakes it not. (*A cry within and tumult.*)

VOICES

Murder ! Murder ! Murder !

*Enter* BERNARDO and SAVELLA

SAVELLA (*to his followers*)

Go search the castle round ; sound the alarm !  
 Look to the gates that none escape !

BEATRICE

What now ?

BERNARDO

I know not what to say . . . my father's dead.

BEATRICE

How ; dead ! he only sleeps ; you mistake, brother.  
His sleep is very calm, very like death ;  
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.  
He is not dead ?

BERNARDO

Dead ; murdered.

LUCRETIA (*with extreme agitation*)

Oh, no, no

He is not murdered though he may be dead ;  
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

SAVELLA

Ha ! Is it so ?

BEATRICE

My Lord, I pray excuse us ;  
We will retire ; my mother is not well :  
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.  
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

SAVELLA

Can you suspect who may have murdered him ?

BERNARDO

I know not what to think.

SAVELLA

Can you name any  
Who had an interest in his death ?



BERNARDO

Alas !

I can name none who had not, and those most  
Who most lament that such a deed is done ;  
My mother, and my sister, and myself.

SAVELLA

'Tis strange ! There were clear marks of violence.  
I found the old man's body in the moonlight  
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,  
Among the branches of a pine : he could not  
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped  
And effortless ; 'tis true there was no blood. . . .  
Favour me, Sir,—it much imports your house  
That all should be made clear,—to tell the ladies  
That I request their presence.

[Exit BERNARDO.]

*Enter Guards bringing in* MARZIO

GUARD

We have one.

OFFICER

My Lord, we found this ruffian and another  
Lurking among the rocks ; there is no doubt  
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci :  
Each had a bag of coin ; this fellow wore  
A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright  
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon  
Betrayed them to our notice : the other fell  
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA

What does he confess ?

OFFICER

He keeps firm silence : but these lines found on him  
May speak.

SAVELLA

Their language is at least sincere. (*Reads.*)

TO THE LADY BEATRICE

"That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write. . . . Thy devoted servant, ORSINO."

*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and BERNARDO

Knowest thou this writing, Lady ?

BEATRICE

No.

SAVELLA

Nor thou ?

LUCRETIA

*(Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation)*

Where was it found ? What is it ? It should be Orsino's hand ! It speaks of that strange horror Which never yet found utterance, but which made Between that hapless child and her dead father A gulph of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA

Is it so ?

Is it true, Lady, that thy father did Such outrages as to awaken in thee Unfilial hate ?

BEATRICE

Not hate—'twas more than hate : This is most true, yet wherefore question me ?

SAVELLA

There is a deed demanding question done ; Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

BEATRICE

What sayest ? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

SAVELLA

I do arrest all present in the name  
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

LUCRETIA

O, not to Rome ! Indeed we are not guilty.

BEATRICE

Guilty ! Who dares talk of guilt ? My Lord,  
I am more innocent of parricide  
Than is a child born fatherless. . . . Dear Mother,  
Your gentleness and patience are no shield  
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,  
Which seems, but is not. What ! will human laws,—  
Rather will ye who are their ministers,—  
Bar all access to retribution first,  
And then, when heaven doth interpose to do  
What ye neglect, arming familiar things  
To the redress of an unwonted crime,  
Make ye the victims who demanded it  
Culprits ? 'Tis ye are culprits ! That poor wretch  
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,  
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was  
A sword in the right hand of justest God.  
Wherefore should I have wielded it ? Unless  
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name  
God therefore scruples to avenge.

SAVELLA

That you desired his death ?                      You own

BEATRICE

It would have been

A crime no less than his, if for one moment  
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.  
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,  
Aye, I even knew,—for God is wise and just,—  
That some strange sudden death hung over him.  
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true  
There was no other rest for me on earth,  
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this ?

## SAVELLA

Strange thoughts beget strange deeds ; and here are  
both :  
I judge thee not.

## BEATRICE

And yet, if you arrest me,  
You are the judge and executioner  
Of that which is the life of life : the breath  
Of accusation kills an innocent name,  
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life  
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false  
That I am guilty of foul parricide ;  
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,  
That other hands have sent my father's soul  
To ask the mercy he denied to me.  
Now leave us free : stain not a noble house  
With vague surmises of rejected crime ;  
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect  
No heavier sum : let them have been enough :  
Leave us the wreck we have.

## SAVELLA

I dare not, Lady.  
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome :  
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

## LUCRETIA

O, not to Rome ! O, take us not to Rome !

BEATRICE

Why not to Rome, dear mother ? There as here  
Our innocence is as an armèd heel  
To trample accusation. God is there  
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes  
The innocent, the injured and the weak ;  
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean  
On me ; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,  
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,  
And had all such examinations made  
Upon the spot, as may be necessary  
To the full understanding of this matter,  
We shall be ready. Mother ; will you come ?

LUCRETIA

Ha ! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest  
Self-accusation from our agony !  
Will Giacomo be there ? Orsino ? Marzio ?  
All present ; all confronted ; all demanding  
Each from the other's countenance the thing  
Which is in every heart ! O, misery !  
[*She faints, and is borne out.*]

SAVELLA

She faints : an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE

My Lord,  
She knows not yet the uses of the world.  
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps  
And loosens not : a snake whose look transmutes  
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.  
She cannot know how well the supine slaves  
Of blind authority read the truth of things  
When written on a brow of guilenessness :  
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence  
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,

A judge and an accuser of the wrong  
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord ;  
Our suite will join yours in the court below.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT

ACT V

SCENE I. *An Apartment in ORSINO's Palace*

*Enter ORSINO and GIACOMO*

GIACOMO

Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end ?  
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise  
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn  
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge !  
O, that the hour when present had cast off  
The mantle of its mystery, and shown  
The ghastly form with which it now returns  
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds  
Of conscience to their prey ! Alas ! Alas !  
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,  
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

ORSINO

It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

GIACOMO

To violate the sacred doors of sleep ;  
To cheat kind nature of the placid death  
Which she prepares for overwearied age ;  
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul  
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers  
A life of burning crimes . . .

ORSINO

You cannot say  
I urged you to the deed.

GIACOMO

O, had I never  
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance  
The mirror of my darkest thoughts ; hadst thou  
Never with hints and questions made me look  
Upon the monster of my thought, until  
It grew familiar to desire . . .

ORSINO

'Tis thus  
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts  
Upon the abettors of their own resolve ;  
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.  
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril  
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness  
Of penitence ; confess 'tis fear disguised  
From its own shame that takes the mantle now  
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe ?

GIACOMO

How can that be ? Already Beatrice,  
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.  
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,  
Sent to arrest us.

ORSINO

I have all prepared  
For instant flight. We can escape even now,  
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

GIACOMO

Rather expire in tortures, as I may.  
What ! will you cast by self-accusing flight  
Assured conviction upon Beatrice ?  
She who, alone in this unnatural work,  
Stands like God's angel ministered upon  
By fiends ; avenging such a nameless wrong  
As turns black parricide to piety ;

Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,  
 While I consider all your words and looks,  
 Comparing them with your proposal now,  
 That you must be a villain. For what end  
 Could you engage in such a perilous crime,  
 Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,  
 Even to this gulph? Thou art no liar? No,  
 Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!  
 Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself;

*(Drawing.)*

Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue  
 Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO

Put up your weapon.

Is it the desperation of your fear  
 Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,  
 Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger  
 Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed  
 Was but to try you. As for me, I think,  
 Thankless affection led me to this point,  
 From which, if my firm temper could repent,  
 I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak  
 The ministers of justice wait below:  
 They grant me these brief moments. Now if you  
 Have any word of melancholy comfort  
 To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass  
 Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO

O, generous friend! How canst you pardon me?  
 Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO

That wish  
 Now comes a day too late. Haste: fare thee well!  
 Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor?

*[Exit GIACOMO.]*

I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting



At his own gate, and such was my contrivance  
That I might rid me both of him and them.  
I thought to act a solemn comedy  
Upon the painted scene of this new world,  
And to attain my own peculiar ends  
By some such plot of mingled good and ill  
As others weave ; but there arose a Power  
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device  
And turned it to a net of ruin . . . Ha !

*(A shout is heard.)*

Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad ?  
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise ;  
Rags on my back, and a false innocence  
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd  
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then  
For a new name and for a country new,  
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,  
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.  
And these must be the masks of that within,  
Which must remain unaltered. . . . Oh, I fear  
That what is past will never let me rest !  
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,  
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt  
Trouble me ? Have I not the power to fly  
My own reproaches ? Shall I be the slave  
Of . . . what ? A word ? which those of this false world  
Employ against each other, not themselves ;  
As men wear daggers not for self-defence.  
But if I am mistaken, where shall I  
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,  
As now I skulk from every other eye ?

*[Exit.]*

SCENE II. *A Hall of Justice. CAMILLO, Judges, etc.,  
are discovered seated ; MARZIO is led in*

FIRST JUDGE

Accused, do you persist in your denial ?

I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty ?  
I demand who were the participators  
In your offence ? Speak truth and the whole truth.

MARZIO

My God ! I did not kill him ; I know nothing ;  
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which  
You would infer my guilt.

SECOND JUDGE

Away with him !

FIRST JUDGE

Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss  
Speak false ? Is it so soft a questioner,  
That you would bandy lover's talk with it  
Till it wind out your life and soul ? Away !

MARZIO

Spare me ! O, spare ! I will confess.

FIRST JUDGE

Then speak.

MARZIO

I strangled him in his sleep.

FIRST JUDGE

Who urged you to it ?

MARZIO

His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate  
Orsino sent me to Petrella ; there  
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia  
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I  
And my companion forthwith murdered him.  
Now let me die.

FIRST JUDGE

This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,  
Lead forth the prisoners !

*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, *guarded*

Look upon this man ;  
When did you see him last ?

BEATRICE

We never saw him.

MARZIO

You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

BEATRICE

I know thee ! How ? Where ? When ?

MARZIO

You know 'twas I  
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes  
To kill your father. When the thing was done  
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold  
And bade me thrive : how I have thriven, you see.  
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,  
You know that what I speak is true.

(BEATRICE *advances towards him ; he covers his face and shrinks back.*)

O, dart

The terrible resentment of those eyes  
On the dead earth ! Turn them away from me !  
They wound : 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,  
Having said this let me be led to death.

BEATRICE

Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.

CAMILLO

Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE

Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness  
And wisdom : can it be that you sit here

To countenance a wicked farce like this?—

When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged  
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart  
And bade to answer, not as he believes,

But as those may suspect or do desire,

Whose questions thence suggest their own reply :

And that in peril of such hideous torments

As merciful God spares even the dammed. Speak now

The thing you surely know, which is that you,

If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,

And you were told : “ Confess that you did poison

Your little nephew ; that fair blue-eyed child

Who was the loadstar of your life : ”—and though

All see, since his most swift and piteous death,

That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,

And all the things hoped for or done therein,

Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,

Yet you would say, “ I confess anything : ”

And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,

The refuge of dishonourable death.

I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert

My innocence.

CAMILLO (*much moved*)

What shall we think, my Lords ?

Shame on these tears ! I thought the heart was frozen

Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul

That she is guiltless.

JUDGE

Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO

I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew

(If he now lived he would be just her age ;

His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes

Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)

As that most perfect image of God's love

That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.

— She is as pure as speechless infancy !

JUDGE

Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,  
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness  
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime  
By the severest forms of law ; nay, even  
To stretch a point against the criminals.  
The prisoners stand accused of parricide  
Upon such evidence as justifies  
Torture.

BEATRICE

What evidence ? This man's ?

JUDGE

Even so.

BEATRICE (*to MARZIO*)

Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth  
Out of the multitude of living men  
To kill the innocent ?

MARZIO

I am Marzio,

Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE

Fix thine eyes on mine ;

Answer to what I ask. (*Turning to the Judges.*)

I prithee mark

His countenance : unlike bold calumny  
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,  
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends  
His gaze on the blind earth.

(*To MARZIO.*) What ! wilt thou say

That I did murder my own father ?

MARZIO

Oh !

Spare me ! My brain swims round. . . . I cannot  
speak. . . .

It was that horrid torture forced the truth.

Take me away ! Let her not look on me !  
I am a guilty miserable wretch ;  
I have said all I know ; now, let me die !

## BEATRICE ✓

My Lords, if by my nature I had been  
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,  
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,  
And the rack makes him utter, do you think  
I should have left this two-edged instrument  
Of my misdeed ; this man, this bloody knife  
With my own name engraven on the hilt,  
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,  
For my own death ? That with such horrible need  
For deepest silence, I should have neglected  
So trivial a precaution, as the making  
His tomb the keeper of a secret written  
On a thief's memory ? What is his poor life ?  
What are a thousand lives ? A parricide  
Had trampled them like dust ; and, see, he lives !  
(*Turning to MARZIO.*) And thou . . .

## MARZIO

Oh, spare me ! Speak to me no more !  
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,  
Wound worse than torture.  
(*To the Judges.*) I have told it all ;  
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

## CAMILLO

Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,  
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf  
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

## BEATRICE

Oh, thou who tremblest on the giddy verge  
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me ;  
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay :

What evil have we done thee ? I, alas !  
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years  
And so my lot was ordered, that a father  
First turned the moments of awakening life  
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope ; and then  
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul ;  
And my untainted fame ; and even that peace  
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart ;  
But the wound was not mortal ; so my hate  
Became the only worship I could lift  
To our great father, who in pity and love,  
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off ;  
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation ;  
And art thou the accuser ? If thou hopest  
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth :  
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.  
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path  
Over the trampled laws of God and man,  
Rush not before thy Judge, and say : " My maker,  
I have done this and more ; for there was one  
Who was most pure and innocent on earth ;  
And because she endured what never any  
Guilty or innocent endured before :  
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought ;  
Because thy hand at length did rescue her ;  
I with my words killed her and all her kin."  
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay  
The reverence living in the minds of men  
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame !  
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,  
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,  
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think  
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood  
All that which shows like innocence, and is,  
Hear me, great God ! I swear, most innocent,  
So that the world lose all discrimination  
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,  
And that which now compels thee to reply

To what I ask : Am I, or am I not  
A parricide ?

MARZIO

Thou art not !

JUDGE

What is this ?

MARZIO

I here declare those whom I did accuse  
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

JUDGE

Drag him away to torments ; let them be  
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds  
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not  
Till he confess.

MARZIO

Torture me as ye will :  
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth  
From my last breath. She is most innocent !  
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me ;  
I will not give you that fine piece of nature  
To rend and ruin. [*Exit MARZIO, guarded.*]

CAMILLO

What say ye now, my Lords ?

JUDGE

Let tortures strain the truth till it be white  
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

CAMILLO

Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE (*to BEATRICE*)

Know you this paper, Lady ?

BEATRICE

Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here  
As my accuser ? Ha ! wilt thou be he,



Who art my judge ? Accuser, witness, judge,  
What, all in one ? Here is Orsino's name ;  
Where is Orsino ? Let his eye meet mine.  
What means this scrawl ? Alas ! Ye know not what,  
And therefore on the chance that it may be  
Some evil, will ye kill us ?

*Enter an Officer*

OFFICER

Marzio's dead.

JUDGE

What did he say ?

OFFICER

Nothing. As soon as we  
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,  
As one who baffles a deep adversary ;  
And holding his breath, died.

JUDGE

There remains nothing  
But to apply the question to those prisoners,  
Who yet remain stubborn.

CAMILLO

I overrule  
Further proceedings, and in the behalf  
Of these most innocent and noble persons  
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

JUDGE

Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile  
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells ;  
And be the engines ready : for this night  
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,  
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth  
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.

*[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III. *The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE is  
*discovered asleep on a Couch*

*Enter BERNARDO*

BERNARDO

How gently slumber rests upon her face,  
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent  
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.  
After such torments as she bore last night,  
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay, me !  
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.  
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest  
From this sweet folded flower, thus . . . wake ! awake !  
What, sister, canst thou sleep ?

BEATRICE (*awaking*)

I was just dreaming  
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest  
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise  
After our father's presence.

BERNARDO

Dear, dear sister,  
Would that thy dream were not a dream ! O, God !  
How shall I tell ?

BEATRICE

What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother ?

BERNARDO

Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst  
I stand considering what I have to say  
My heart will break.

BEATRICE

See now, thou mak'st me weep :  
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,  
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

BERNARDO

They have confessed ; they could endure no more  
The tortures . . .

BEATRICE

Ha ! What was there to confess ?  
They must have told some weak and wicked lie  
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said  
That they were guilty ? O, white innocence,  
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide  
Thine awful and serenest countenance  
From those who know thee not !

*Enter Judge with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded*

Ignoble hearts !

For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least  
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,  
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust ?  
And that eternal honour which should live  
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,  
Changed to a mockery and a bye-word ? What !  
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged  
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep  
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,  
Who, that they may make our calamity  
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave  
The churches and the theatres as void  
As their own hearts ? Shall the light multitude  
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,  
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,  
Upon us as we pass to pass away,  
And leave . . . what memory of our having been ?  
Infamy, blood, terror, despair ? O thou,  
Who wert a mother to the parentless,  
Kill not thy child ! Let not her wrongs kill thee !  
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,  
And let us each be silent as a corpse ;  
It soon will be as soft as any grave.

'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear  
Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO

They will tear the truth  
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains :  
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA

O, speak the truth ! Let us all quickly die ;  
And after death, God is our judge, not they ;  
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO

If indeed  
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine ;  
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,  
And all be well.

JUDGE

Confess, or I will warp  
Your limbs with such keen tortures . . .

BEATRICE

Tortures ! Turn  
The rack henceforth into a spinning wheel !  
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last  
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me !  
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,  
And of the soul ; aye, of the inmost soul,  
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall  
To see, in this ill world where none are true,  
My kindred false to their deserted selves.  
And with considering all the wretched life  
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,  
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth  
To me or mine ; and what a tyrant thou art, .  
And what slaves these ; and what a world we make,  
The oppressor and the oppressed . . . such pangs compel  
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?

JUDGE

Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?

BEATRICE

Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God  
That he permitted such an act as that  
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld ;  
Made it unutterable, and took from it  
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,  
But that which thou hast called my father's death ?  
Which is or is not what men call a crime,  
Which either I have done, or have not done ;  
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.  
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,  
And so an end of all. Now do your will ;  
No other pains shall force another word.

JUDGE

She is convicted, but has not confessed.  
Be it enough. Until their final sentence  
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,  
Linger not here !

BEATRICE

O, tear him not away !

JUDGE

Guards, do your duty.

BERNARDO (*embracing* BEATRICE)

Oh, would ye divide

Body from soul ?

OFFICER

That is the headsman's business.

[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO.]

GIACOMO

Have I confessed ? Is it all over now ?  
No hope ! No refuge ! O, weak, wicked tongue  
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been

Cut out and thrown to dogs first ! to have killed  
My father first, and then betrayed my sister ;  
Aye, thee ! the one thing innocent and pure  
In this black guilty world, to that which I  
So well deserve ! My wife ! my little ones !  
Destitute, helpless, and I . . . Father ! God !  
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,  
When their full hearts break thus, thus ! . . .  
*(Covers his face and weeps.)*

## LUCRETIA

O, my child !

To what a dreadful end are we all come !  
Why did I yield ? Why did I not sustain  
Those torments ? Oh, that I were all dissolved  
Into these fast and unavailing tears,  
Which flow and feel not !

## BEATRICE

What 'twas weak to do,

'Tis weaker to lament, once being done ;  
Take cheer ! The God who knew my wrong, and made  
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,  
Seems, and but seems to have abandoned us.  
Let us not think that we shall die for this.  
Brother, sit near me ; give me your firm hand,  
You had a manly heart. Bear up ! Bear up !  
O, dearest Lady, put your gentle head  
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile :  
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,  
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.  
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,  
Not cheerful, nor yet sad ; some dull old thing,  
Some outworn and unused monotony,  
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,  
Till they almost forget they live : lie down !  
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words ?  
Faith ! They are sadder than I thought they were.

## SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep  
When my life is laid asleep ?  
Little cares for a smile or a tear  
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier !  
Farewell ! Heigho !  
What is this whispers low ?  
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear ;  
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,  
Or if thou couldst mortal be,  
I would close these eyes of pain ;  
When to wake ? Never again.  
O, World ! Farewell !  
Listen to the passing bell !  
It says, thou and I must part,  
With a light and a heavy heart.

*[The scene closes.]*

SCENE IV. *A Hall of the Prison*

*Enter CAMILLO and BERNARDO*

## CAMILLO

The Pope is stern ; not to be moved or bent.  
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine  
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself  
From aught that it inflicts ; a marble form,  
A rite, a law, a custom : not a man.  
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick  
Of his machinery, on the advocates  
Presenting the defences, which he tore  
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice :  
“ Which among ye defended their old father  
Killed in his sleep ? ” Then to another : “ Thou

Dost this in virtue of thy place ; 'tis well."  
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,  
And said these three words, coldly : " They must die."

BERNARDO

And yet you left him not ?

CAMILLO

I urged him still ;  
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong  
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.  
And he replied : " Paolo Santa Croce  
Murdered his mother yester evening,  
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife,<sup>4</sup>  
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young  
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.  
Authority, and power, and hoary hair  
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,  
You come to ask their pardon ; stay a moment ;  
Here is their sentence ; never see me more  
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO

O, God, not so ! I did believe indeed  
That all you said was but sad preparation  
For happy news. O, there are words and looks  
To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them,  
Now I forget them at my dearest need.  
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe  
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?  
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain  
With my perpetual cries, until in rage  
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample  
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood  
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,  
And remorse waken mercy ? I will do it !  
O, wait till I return !

[*Rushes out.*



CAMILLO

Alas ! poor boy !

A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray  
To the deaf sea.

*Enter* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, *guarded*

BEATRICE

I hardly dare to fear  
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO

May God in heaven be less inexorable  
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.  
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE (*wildly*)

Oh,

My God ! Can it be possible I have  
To die so suddenly ? So young to go  
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground !  
To be nailed down into a narrow place ;  
To see no more sweet sunshine ; hear no more  
Blithe voice of living thing ; muse not again  
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—  
How fearful ! to be nothing ! Or to be . . .  
What ? O, where am I ? Let me not go mad !  
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there should be  
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world ;  
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world !  
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,  
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me ;  
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life !  
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,  
Even the form which tortured me on earth,  
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come  
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix  
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down !

For was he not alone omnipotent  
 On Earth, and ever present ? Even though dead,  
 Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,  
 And work for me and mine still the same ruin,  
 Scorn, pain, despair ? Who ever yet returned  
 To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm ?  
 Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,  
 O, whither, whither ?

LUCRETIA

Trust in God's sweet love,  
 The tender promises of Christ : ere night,  
 Think, we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE

'Tis past !  
 Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.  
 And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill :  
 How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I  
 Have met with much injustice in this world ;  
 No difference has been made by God or man,  
 Or any power moulding my wretched lot,  
 'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.  
 I am cut off from the only world I know,  
 From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.  
 You do well telling me to trust in God,—  
 I hope I do trust in him. In whom else  
 Can any trust ? And yet my heart is cold.

*[During the latter speeches GIACOMO has retired  
 conversing with CAMILLO, who now goes out ;  
 GIACOMO advances.]*

GIACOMO

Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not ?  
 Bernardo even now is gone to implore  
 The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA

Child, perhaps

It will be granted. We may all then live  
To make these woes a tale for distant years :  
O, what a thought ! It gushes to my heart  
Like the warm blood.

## BEATRICE

Yet both will soon be cold.  
O, trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,  
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :  
It is the only ill which can find place  
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour  
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost  
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :  
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch  
Even now a city stands, strong, fair and free ;  
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. O, plead  
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,  
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !  
Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,  
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die :  
Since such is the reward of innocent lives ;  
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.  
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,  
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears  
To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave  
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,  
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !  
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,  
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.  
Live ye, who live, subject to one another  
As we were once, who now . . .

BERNARDO *rushes in*

## BERNARDO

Oh, horrible !  
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,  
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,  
Should all be vain ! The ministers of death

Are waiting round the doors: I thought I saw  
 Blood on the face of one . . . what if 'twere fancy ?  
 Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth  
 Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off  
 As if 'twere only rain. O, life ! O, world !  
 Cover me ! let me be no more ! To see  
 That perfect mirror of pure innocence  
 Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,  
 Shivered to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,  
 Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .  
 Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark ! while I say, sister,  
 To hear I have no sister ; and thou, Mother,  
 Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .  
 Dead ! The sweet bond broken !

*Enter CAMILLO and Guards*

They come ! Let me  
 Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves  
 Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before  
 Death chokes that gentle voice ! O, let me hear  
 You speak !

BEATRICE

Farewell, my tender brother. Think  
 Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now :  
 And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee  
 Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,  
 But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,  
 For thine own sake be constant to the love  
 Thou bearest us ; and to the faith that I,  
 Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,  
 Lived ever holy and unstained. And though  
 Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name  
 Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow  
 For men to point at as they pass, do thou  
 Forbear, and never think a thought unkind  
 Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.  
 So mayest thou die as I do ; fear and pain  
 Being subdued. Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

BERNARDO

I cannot say, farewell !

CAMILLO

O, Lady Beatrice !

BEATRICE

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,  
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie  
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair  
In any simple knot ; aye, that does well.  
And yours I see is coming down. How often  
Have we done this for one another ; now  
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,  
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.



# PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A LYRICAL DRAMA  
IN FOUR ACTS

## PREFACE

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could



conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the

study of their works, (since a higher merit would probably be denied me,) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate ; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same ; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive

form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold enquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are,

in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope ; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world : " what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence ; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence ; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom

will need little apology with the candid ; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them : if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient ; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts ; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS

DEMOGORGON

JUPITER

THE EARTH

OCEAN

APOLLO

MERCURY

HERCULES

ASIA

PANTHEA } Oceanides

IONE

THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH

THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON

SPIRITS OF THE HOURS

SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUN'S. FURIES

# PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

## ACT I

SCENE. *A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.*  
PROMETHEUS is discovered bound to the Precipice.  
PANTHEA and IONE are seated at his feet. TIME,  
*Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks,*

### PROMETHEUS

MONARCH of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits  
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds  
Which Thou and I alone of living things  
Behold with sleepless eyes ! regard this Earth  
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou  
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,  
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,  
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.  
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,  
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,  
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.  
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,  
And moments aye divided by keen pangs  
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,  
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire.  
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest  
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God !  
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame  
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here  
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,  
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured ; without herb  
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.  
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

No change, no pause, no hope ! Yet I endure.  
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?  
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,  
Has it not seen ? The Sea, in storm or calm,  
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,  
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony ?  
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears  
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains  
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.  
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips  
His beak in poison not his own, tears up  
My heart ; and shapeless sights come wandering by,  
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,  
Mocking me : and the Earthquake-fiends are charged  
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds  
When the rocks split and close again behind :  
While from their loud abysses howling throng  
The genii of the storm, urging the rage  
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.  
And yet to me welcome is day and night,  
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,  
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs  
The leaden-coloured east ; for then they lead  
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom  
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—  
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood  
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee  
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.  
Disdain ! Ah no ! I pity thee. What ruin  
Will hunt thee undefended through the wide Heaven !  
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,  
Gape like a hell within ! I speak in grief,  
Not exultation, for I hate no more,  
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse  
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,  
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist



Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell !  
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,  
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept  
Shuddering through India ! Thou serenest Air,  
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams !  
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings  
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,  
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock  
The orbèd world ! If then my words had power,  
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish  
Is dead within ; although no memory be  
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now !  
What was that curse ? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE : *from the Mountains*

Thrice three hundred thousand years  
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood :  
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,  
We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE : *from the Springs*

Thunder-bolts had parched our water,  
We had been stained with bitter blood,  
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,  
Through a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE : *from the Air*

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,  
Its wastes in colours not their own,  
And oft had my serene repose  
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE : *from the Whirlwinds*

We had soared beneath these mountains  
Unresting ages ; nor had thunder,  
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,  
Nor any power above or under  
Ever made us mute with wonder.

## FIRST VOICE

But never bowed our snowy crest  
As at the voice of thine unrest.

## SECOND VOICE

Never such a sound before  
To the Indian waves we bore.  
A pilot asleep on the howling sea  
Leaped up from the deck in agony,  
And heard, and cried, " Ah, woe is me ! "  
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

## THIRD VOICE

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven  
My still realm was never riven :  
When its wound was closed, there stood  
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

## FOURTH VOICE

And we shrank back : for dreams of ruin  
To frozen caves our flight pursuing  
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—  
Though silence is a hell to us.

## THE EARTH

The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills  
Cried, " Misery ! " then ; the hollow Heaven replied,  
" Misery ! " And the Ocean's purple waves,  
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,  
And the pale nations heard it, " Misery ! "

## PROMETHEUS

I hear a sound of voices : not the voice  
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou  
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will  
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,  
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist

Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,  
The Titan ? He who made his agony  
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe ?  
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,  
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,  
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once  
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes ;  
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now  
To commune with me ? me alone, who checked,  
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,  
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns  
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves  
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses :  
Why answer ye not, still ? Brethren !

THE EARTH

They dare not.

PROMETHEUS

Who dares ? for I would hear that curse again.  
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up !  
'Tis scarce like sound : it tingles through the frame  
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.  
Speak, Spirit ! from thine inorganic voice  
I only know that thou art moving near  
And love. How cursed I him ?

THE EARTH

How canst thou hear  
Who knowest not the language of the dead ?

PROMETHEUS

Thou art a living spirit : speak as they.

THE EARTH

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King  
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain  
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.  
Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods

Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God  
Being wise and kind : earnestly hearken now.

## PROMETHEUS

Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,  
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel  
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love ;  
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

## THE EARTH

No, thou canst not hear :  
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known  
Only to those who die.

## PROMETHEUS

And what art thou,  
O, melancholy Voice ?

## THE EARTH

I am the Earth,  
Thy mother ; she within whose stony veins,  
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree  
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,  
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,  
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud  
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy !  
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted  
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,  
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread  
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.  
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll  
Around us : their inhabitants beheld  
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven ; the sea  
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire  
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow  
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown ;  
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains ;  
Blue thistles bloomed in cities ; foodless toads  
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled :

When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,  
And Famine ; and black blight on herb and tree ;  
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,  
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds  
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry  
With grief ; and the thin air, my breath, was stained  
With the contagion of a mother's hate  
Breathed on her child's destroyer ; aye, I heard  
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,  
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,  
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,  
And the inarticulate people of the dead,  
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate  
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words  
But dare not speak them.

## PROMETHEUS

Venerable mother !

All else who live and suffer take from thee  
Some comfort ; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,  
And love, though fleeting ; these may not be mine.  
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

## THE EARTH

They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,  
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,  
Met his own image walking in the garden.  
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.  
For know there are two worlds of life and death :  
One that which thou beholdest ; but the other  
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit  
The shadows of all forms that think and live  
Till death unite them and they part no more ;  
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,  
And all that faith creates or love desires,  
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.  
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,  
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains ; all the gods

Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,  
Vast, sceptred phantoms ; heroes, men, and beasts ;  
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;  
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne  
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter  
The curse which all remember. Call at will  
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,  
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods  
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin,  
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.  
Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge  
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,  
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate  
Of a fallen palace.

## PROMETHEUS

Mother, let not aught  
Of that which may be evil, pass again  
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.  
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

## IONE

My wings are folded o'er mine ears :  
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes :  
Yet through their silver shade appears,  
And through their lulling plumes arise,  
A Shape, a throng of sounds ;  
May it be no ill to thee  
O thou of many wounds !  
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,  
Ever thus we watch and wake.

## PANTHEA

The sound is of whirlwind underground,  
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven ;  
The shape is awful like the sound,  
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.  
A sceptre of pale gold

To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud  
His veined hand doth hold.  
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,  
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

## PHANTASM OF JUPITER

Why have the secret powers of this strange world  
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither  
On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds  
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice  
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk  
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

## PROMETHEUS

Tremendous Image, as thou art must be  
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,  
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,  
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

## THE EARTH

Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,  
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,  
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,  
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

## PHANTASM

A spirit seizes me and speaks within :  
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

## PANTHEA

See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven  
Darkens above.

## IONE

He speaks! O shelter me!

## PROMETHEUS

I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,  
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,  
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,  
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh, speak!

## PHANTASM

Fiend, I defy thee ! with a calm, fixed mind,  
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do ;  
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,  
One only being shalt thou not subdue.  
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,  
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear ;  
And let alternate frost and fire  
Eat into me, and be thine ire  
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms  
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Aye, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.  
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,  
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent  
To blast mankind, from yon ætherial tower.  
Let thy malignant spirit move  
In darkness over those I love :  
On me and mine I imprecate  
The utmost torture of thy hate ;  
And thus devote to sleepless agony,  
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord : O, thou,  
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,  
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow  
In fear and worship : all-prevailing foe !  
I curse thee ! let a sufferer's curse  
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse ;  
Till thine Infinity shall be  
A robe of envenomed agony ;  
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,  
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,  
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good ;  
Both infinite as is the universe,  
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.  
An awful image of calm power



Though now thou sittest, let the hour  
Come, when thou must appear to be  
That which thou art internally.  
And after many a false and fruitless crime  
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space  
and time.

PROMETHEUS

Were these my words, O Parent ?

THE EARTH

They were thine.

PROMETHEUS

It doth repent me : words are quick and vain ;  
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.  
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH

Misery, Oh misery to me,  
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.  
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,  
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.  
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,  
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

FIRST ECHO

Lies fallen and vanquishèd !

SECOND ECHO

Fallen and vanquishèd !

IONE

Fear not : 'tis but some passing spasm ;  
The Titan is unvanquished still.  
But see, where through the azure chasm  
Of yon forked and snowy hill  
Trampling the slant winds on high  
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow

Under plumes of purple dye,  
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,  
A Shape comes now,  
Stretching on high from his right hand  
A serpent-cinctured wand.

## PANTHEA

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

## IONE

And who are those with hydra tresses  
And iron wings that climb the wind,  
Whom the frowning God represses  
Like vapours steaming up behind,  
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

## PANTHEA

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds.  
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,  
When charioted on sulphurous cloud  
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

## IONE

Are they now led, from the thin dead  
On new pangs to be fed ?

## PANTHEA

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

## FIRST FURY

Ha ! I scent life !

## SECOND FURY

Let me but look into his eyes !

## THIRD FURY

The hope of torturing him smells like a heap  
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.

## FIRST FURY

Darest thou delay, O Herald ! take cheer, Hounds  
Of Hell : what if the Son of Maia soon  
Should make us food and sport—who can please long  
The Omnipotent ?

## MERCURY

Back to your towers of iron,  
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,  
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise ! and Gorgon,  
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends  
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,  
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate :  
These shall perform your task.

## FIRST FURY

Oh, mercy ! mercy !  
We die with our desire : drive us not back !

## MERCURY

Crouch then in silence.

## Awful Sufferer

To the unwilling, most unwillingly  
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,  
To execute a doom of new revenge.  
Alas ! I pity thee, and hate myself  
That I can do no more : aye from thy sight  
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,  
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,  
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,  
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife  
Against the Omnipotent ; as yon clear lamps  
That measure and divide the weary years  
From which there is no refuge, long have taught  
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms  
With the strange might of unimagined pains  
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,  
And my commission is to lead them here,

Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends  
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.  
Be it not so ! there is a secret known  
To thee, and to none else of living things,  
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,  
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme :  
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne  
In intercession ; bend thy soul in prayer,  
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,  
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart :  
For benefits and meek submission tame  
The fiercest and the mightiest.

## PROMETHEUS

Evil minds  
Change good to their own nature. I gave all  
He has ; and in return he chains me here  
Years, ages, night and day : whether the Sun  
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night  
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair :  
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down  
By his thought-executing ministers.  
Such is the tyrant's recompense : 'tis just :  
He who is evil can receive no good ;  
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,  
He can feel hate, fear, shame ; not gratitude :  
He but requites me for his own misdeed.  
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks  
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.  
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try :  
For what submission but that fatal word,  
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,  
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,  
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,  
Or could I yield ? Which yet I will not yield.  
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned  
In brief Omnipotence : secure are they :  
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down

Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,  
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,  
Enduring thus, the retributive hour  
Which since we spake is even nearer now.  
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour : fear delay :  
Behold ! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY

Oh, that we might be spared,—I to inflict  
And thou to suffer ! Once more answer me :  
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power ?

PROMETHEUS

I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY

Alas !

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain ?

PROMETHEUS

They last while Jove must reign : nor more, nor less  
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY

Yet pause, and plunge  
Into Eternity, where recorded time,  
Even all that we imagine, age on age,  
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind  
Flags wearily in its unending flight,  
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless ;  
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years  
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved ?

PROMETHEUS

Perchance no thought can count them : yet they pass.

MERCURY

If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while  
Lapped in voluptuous joy ?

## PROMETHEUS

I would not quit  
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

## MERCURY

Alas ! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

## PROMETHEUS

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,  
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,  
As light in the sun, throned : how vain is talk !  
Call up the fiends.

## IONE

O, sister, look ! White fire  
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar ;  
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind !

## MERCURY

I must obey his words and thine : alas !  
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

## PANTHEA

See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,  
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

## IONE

Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes  
Lest thou behold and die : they come : they come :  
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,  
And hollow underneath, like death.

## FIRST FURY

Prometheus !

## SECOND FURY

Immortal Titan !

## THIRD FURY

Champion of Heaven's slaves !

## PROMETHEUS

He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,  
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,  
What and who are ye ? Never yet there came  
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell  
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove ;  
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,  
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,  
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

## FIRST FURY

We are the ministers of pain, and fear,  
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,  
And clinging crime ; and as lean dogs pursue  
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,  
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,  
When the great King betrays them to our will.

## PROMETHEUS

Oh ! many fearful natures in one name,  
I know ye ; and these lakes and echoes know  
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.  
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves  
Gather ye up in legions from the deep ?

## SECOND FURY

We knew not that : Sisters, rejoice, rejoice !

## PROMETHEUS

Can aught exult in its deformity ?

## SECOND FURY

The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,  
Gazing on one another : so are we.  
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels  
To gather for her festal crown of flowers

The ærial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,  
So from our victim's destined agony  
The shade which is our form invests us round ;  
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

## PROMETHEUS

I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,  
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

## FIRST FURY

Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,  
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within ?

## PROMETHEUS

Pain is my element, as hate is thine ;  
Ye rend me now : I care not.

## SECOND FURY

Dost imagine

We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes ?

## PROMETHEUS

I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,  
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called  
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

## THIRD FURY

Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,  
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not  
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell  
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude  
Vexing the self-content of wisest men :  
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,  
And foul desire round thine astonished heart  
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins  
Crawling like agony.



## PROMETHEUS

Why, ye are thus now ;  
Yet am I king over myself, and rule  
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,  
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

## CHORUS OF FURIES

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,  
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,

Come, come, come !

Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,  
When cities sink howling in ruin ; and ye  
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,  
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,  
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck ;

Come, come, come !

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,  
Strewed beneath a nation dead ;

Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning :

It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning :

Leave the self-contempt implanted

In young spirits, sense-enchanted,

Misery's yet unkindled fuel :

Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted

To the maniac dreamer ; cruel

More than ye can be with hate

Is he with fear.

Come, come, come !

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate  
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,  
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

## IONE

Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

## PANTHEA

These solid mountains quiver with the sound  
Even as the tremulous air : their shadows make  
The space within my plumes more black than night.

## FIRST FURY

Your call was as a wingèd car  
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far ;  
It rapt us from red gulphs of war.

## SECOND FURY

From wide cities, famine-wasted ;

## THIRD FURY

Groans half heard, and blood untasted ;

## FOURTH FURY

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,  
Where blood with gold is bought and sold ;

## FIFTH FURY

From the furnace, white and hot,  
In which—

## A FURY

Speak not : whisper not :  
I know all that ye would tell,  
But to speak might break the spell  
Which must bend the Invincible,  
The stern of thought ;  
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

## FURY

Tear the veil !

## ANOTHER FURY

It is torn.

## CHORUS

The pale stars of the morn  
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.  
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.  
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou wakenedst  
for man?

Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran  
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,  
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

One came forth of gentle worth  
Smiling on the sanguine earth;  
His words outlived him, like swift poison  
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.

Look! where round the wide horizon

Many a million-peopled city  
Vomits smoke in the bright air.

Mark that outcry of despair!

'Tis his mild and gentle ghost

Wailing for the faith he kindled:

Look again, the flames almost

To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:

The survivors round the embers

Gather in dread.

Joy, joy, joy!

Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,  
And the future is dark, and the present is spread  
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

## SEMICHORUS I

Drops of bloody agony flow  
From his white and quivering brow.  
Grant a little respite now:  
See a disenchantèd nation  
Springs like day from desolation;  
To Truth its state is dedicate,  
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;  
A legionèd band of linkèd brothers  
Whom Love calls children—

## SEMICHORUS II

'Tis another's :

See how kindred murder kin :

'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin :

Blood, like new wine, bubbles within :

Till Despair smothers

The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the FURIES vanish, except one.*]

## IONE

Hark, sister ! what a low yet dreadful groan

Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart

Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,

And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.

Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him ?

## PANTHEA

Alas ! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

## IONE

What didst thou see ?

## PANTHEA

A woful sight : a youth

With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

## IONE

What next ?

## PANTHEA

The heaven around, the earth below  
 Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,  
 All horrible, and wrought by human hands,  
 And some appeared the work of human hearts,  
 For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles :  
 And other sights too foul to speak and live  
 Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear  
 By looking forth : those groans are grief enough.

## FURY

Behold an emblem : those who do endure  
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap  
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

## PROMETHEUS

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare ;  
Close those wan lips ; let that thorn-wounded brow  
Stream not with blood ; it mingles with thy tears !  
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,  
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,  
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.  
O, horrible ! Thy name I will not speak,  
It hath become a curse. I see, I see  
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,  
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,  
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,  
An early-chosen, late-lamented home ;  
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind ;  
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells :  
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud ?—  
Impaled in lingering fire : and mighty realms  
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,  
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood  
By the red light of their own burning homes.

## FURY

Blood thou canst see, and fire ; and canst hear groans ;  
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

## PROMETHEUS

Worse ?

## FURY

In each human heart terror survives  
The ruin it has gorged : the loftiest fear  
All that they would disdain to think were true :  
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds

The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.  
They dare not devise good for man's estate,  
And yet they know not that they do not dare,  
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.  
The powerful goodness want : worse need for them.  
The wise want love ; and those who love want wisdom ;  
And all best things are thus confused to ill.  
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,  
But live among their suffering fellow-men  
As if none felt : they know not what they do.

## PROMETHEUS

Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes ;  
And yet I pity those they torture not.

## FURY

Thou pitiest them ? I speak no more ! [Vanishes.

## PROMETHEUS

Ah woe !

Ah woe ! Alas ! pain, pain ever, for ever !  
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear  
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,  
Thou subtle tyrant ! Peace is in the grave.  
The grave hides all things beautiful and good :  
I am a God and cannot find it there,  
Nor would I seek it : for, though dread revenge,  
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.  
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul  
With new endurance, till the hour arrives  
When they shall be no types of things which are.

## PANTHEA

Alas ! what sawest thou ?

## PROMETHEUS

There are two woes ;  
To speak, and to behold ; thou spare me one.

Names are there, Nature's sacred watch-words, they  
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry ;  
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,  
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love !  
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven  
Among them : there was strife, deceit, and fear :  
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.  
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

## THE EARTH

I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy  
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state  
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,  
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,  
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,  
Its world-surrounding æther : they behold  
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,  
The future : may they speak comfort to thee !

## PANTHEA

Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,  
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,  
Thronging in the blue air !

## IONE

And see ! more come,  
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,  
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.  
And, hark ! is it the music of the pines ?  
Is it the lake ? Is it the waterfall ?

## PANTHEA

'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

## CHORUS OF SPIRITS

From unremembered ages we  
Gentle guides and guardians be

Of heaven-oppressed mortality ;  
And we breathe, and sicken not,  
The atmosphere of human thought :  
Be it dim, and dank, and grey,  
Like a storm-extinguished day,  
Travelled o'er by dying gleams ;  
Be it bright as all between  
Cloudless skies and windless streams,  
Silent, liquid, and serene ;  
As the birds within the wind,  
As the fish within the wave,  
As the thoughts of man's own mind  
Float through all above the grave ;  
We make there our liquid lair,  
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent  
Through the boundless element :  
Thence we bear the prophecy  
Which begins and ends in thee !

## IONE

More yet come, one by one : the air around them  
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

## FIRST SPIRIT

On a battle-trumpet's blast  
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,  
'Mid the darkness upward cast.  
From the dust of creeds outworn,  
From the tyrant's banner torn,  
Gathering round me, onward borne,  
There was mingled many a cry—  
Freedom ! Hope ! Death ! Victory !  
Till they faded through the sky ;  
And one sound, above, around,  
One sound beneath, around, above,  
Was moving ; 'twas the soul of love ;  
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,  
Which begins and ends in thee.



## SECOND SPIRIT

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,  
Which rocked beneath, immovably ;  
And the triumphant storm did flee,  
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,  
Between, with many a captive cloud,  
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,  
Each by lightning riven in half :  
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh :  
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff  
And spread beneath a hell of death  
O'er the white waters. I alit  
On a great ship lightning-split,  
And speeded hither on the sigh  
Of one who gave an enemy  
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

## THIRD SPIRIT

I sate beside a sage's bed,  
And the lamp was burning red  
Near the book where he had fed,  
When a Dream with plumes of flame,  
To his pillow hovering came,  
And I knew it was the same  
Which had kindled long ago  
Pity, eloquence, and woe ;  
And the world awhile below  
Wore the shade, its lustre made.  
It has borne me here as fleet  
As Desire's lightning feet :  
I must ride it back ere morrow,  
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

## FOURTH SPIRIT

On a poet's lips I slept  
Dreaming like a love-adept  
In the sound his breathing kept ;

Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
 But feeds on the ærial kisses  
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.  
 He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality !  
 One of these awakened me,  
 And I sped to succour thee.

IONE

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west  
 Come, as two doves to one belovèd nest,  
 Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air  
 On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere ?  
 And, hark ! their sweet, sad voices ! 'tis despair  
 Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA

Canst thou speak, sister ? all my words are drowned.

IONE

Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float  
 On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,  
 Orange and azure deepening into gold :  
 Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

Hast thou beheld the form of Love ?

FIFTH SPIRIT

As over wide dominions  
 I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's  
 wildernesses,  
 That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-  
 braided pinions,

Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses :

His footsteps paved the world with light ; but as I passed 'twas fading,

And hollow Ruin yawned behind : great sages bound in madness,

And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unupbraiding,

Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of sadness,

Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

#### SIXTH SPIRIT

Ah, sister ! Desolation is a delicate thing :

It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,

But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing

The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear ;

Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above

And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,

Dream visions of ærial joy, and call the monster, Love,

And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

#### CHORUS

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,

Following him, destroyingly,

On Death's white and wingèd steed,

Which the fleetest cannot flee,

Trampling down both flower and weed,

Man and beast, and foul and fair,

Like a tempest through the air ;

Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,

Woundless though in heart or limb.

#### PROMETHEUS

Spirits ! how know ye this shall be ?

## CHORUS

In the atmosphere we breathe,  
 As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,  
 From spring gathering up beneath,  
 Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,  
 And the wandering herdsmen know  
 That the white-thorn soon will blow :  
 Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,  
 When they struggle to increase,  
 Are to us as soft winds be  
 To shepherd boys, the prophecy  
 Which begins and ends in thee.

## IONE

Where are the Spirits fled ?

## PANTHEA

Only a sense  
 Remains of them, like the omnipotence  
 Of music, when the inspired voice and lute  
 Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,  
 Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,  
 Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

## PROMETHEUS

How fair these air-born shapes ! and yet I feel  
 Most vain all hope but love ; and thou art far,  
 Asia ! who, when my being overflowed,  
 Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine  
 Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.  
 All things are still : alas ! how heavily  
 This quiet morning weighs upon my heart ;  
 Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief  
 If slumber were denied not. I would fain  
 Be what it is my destiny to be,  
 The saviour and the strength of suffering man,  
 Or sink into the original gulph of things :  
 There is no agony, and no solace left ;  
 Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA

Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee  
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when  
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her ?

PROMETHEUS

I said all hope was vain but love : thou lovest.

PANTHEA

Deeply in truth ; but the eastern star looks white,  
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale  
The scene of her sad exile ; rugged once  
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine ;  
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,  
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow  
Among the woods and waters, from the æther  
Of her transforming presence, which would fade  
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell !

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

SCENE I. *Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian  
Caucasus. ASIA alone*

ASIA

From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended :  
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes  
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,  
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,  
Which should have learnt repose : thou hast descended  
Cradled in tempests ; thou dost wake, O Spring !  
O child of many winds ! As suddenly  
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,  
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet ;

Like genius, or like joy which riseth up  
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds  
The desert of our life.  
This is the season, this the day, the hour ;  
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,  
Too long desired, too long delaying, come !  
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl !  
The point of one white star is quivering still  
Deep in the orange light of widening morn  
Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm  
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake  
Reflects it : now it wanes : it gleams again  
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads  
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air :  
'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow  
The roseate sun-light quivers : hear I not  
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes  
Winnowing the crimson dawn ?

*PANTHEA enters*

I feel, I see  
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,  
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.  
Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest  
The shadow of that soul by which I live,  
How late thou art ! the spherèd sun had climbed  
The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before  
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

*PANTHEA*

Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were faint  
With the delight of a remembered dream,  
As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds  
Sate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep  
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm  
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy  
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,  
Both love and woe familiar to my heart

As they had grown to thine : erewhile I slept  
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean  
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,  
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms  
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,  
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within  
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :  
But not as now, since I am made the wind  
Which fails beneath the music that I bear  
Of thy most wordless converse ; since dissolved  
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest  
Was troubled and yet sweet ; my waking hours  
Too full of care and pain.

ASIA

Lift up thine eyes,  
And let me read thy dream.

PANTHEA

As I have said,  
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.  
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice  
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,  
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.  
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.  
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs  
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night  
Grew radiant with the glory of that form  
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell  
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,  
Faint with intoxication of keen joy :  
" Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world  
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,  
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me."  
I lifted them : the overpowering light  
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er  
By love ; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,  
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,

Steamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere  
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,  
As the warm æther of the morning sun  
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.  
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt  
His presence flow and mingle through my blood  
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,  
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,  
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,  
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,  
And tremulous as they, in the deep night  
My being was condensed ; and as the rays  
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear  
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died  
Like footsteps of weak melody : thy name  
Among the many sounds alone I heard  
Of what might be articulate ; though still  
I listened through the night when sound was none.  
Ione wakened then, and said to me :  
“ Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night ?  
I always knew what I desired before,  
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.  
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek ;  
I know not ; something sweet, since it is sweet  
Even to desire ; it is thy sport, false sister ;  
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,  
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept  
And mingled it with thine : for when just now  
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips  
The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth  
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,  
Quivered between our intertwining arms.”  
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,  
But fled to thee.

## ASIA

Thou speakest, but thy words  
Are as the air : I feel them not : Oh, lift  
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul !



PANTHEA

I lift them though they droop beneath the load  
Of that they would express : what canst thou see  
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there ?

ASIA

Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven  
Contracted to two circles underneath  
Their long, fine lashes ; dark, far, measureless,  
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

PANTHEA

Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed ?

ASIA

There is a change : beyond their inmost depth  
I see a shade, a shape : 'tis He, arrayed  
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread  
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.  
Prometheus, it is thine ! depart not yet !  
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again  
Within that bright pavilion which their beams  
Shall build on the waste world ? The dream is told.  
What shape is that between us ? Its rude hair  
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard  
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,  
For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew  
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

DREAM

Follow ! Follow !

PANTHEA

It is mine other dream.

ASIA

It disappears.

PANTHEA

It passes now into my mind. Methought  
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds

Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,  
 When swift from the white Scythian wilderness  
 A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost :  
 I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down ;  
 But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells  
 Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,  
 O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

## ASIA

As you speak, your words  
 Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep  
 With shapes. Methought among the lawns together  
 We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,  
 And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds  
 Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains  
 Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind ;  
 And the white dew on the new bladed grass,  
 Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently :  
 And there was more which I remember not :  
 But on the shadows of the morning clouds,  
 Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written  
 FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW ! as they vanished by,  
 And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had  
     fallen,  
 The like was stamped, as with a withering fire.  
 A wind arose among the pines ; it shook  
 The clinging music from their boughs, and then  
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,  
 Were heard : OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME !  
 And then I said : " Panthea, look on me."  
 But in the depth of those belovèd eyes  
 Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

## ECHO

Follow, follow !

## PANTHEA

The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices  
 As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA

It is some being  
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds ! O, list !

ECHOES (*unseen*)

Echoes we : listen !  
We cannot stay :  
As dew-stars glisten  
Then fade away—  
Child of Ocean !

ASIA

Hark ! Spirits speak. The liquid responses  
Of their ærial tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA

I hear.

ECHOES

O, follow, follow,  
As our voice recedeth  
Through the caverns hollow,  
Where the forest spreadeth ;

(*More distant*)

O, follow, follow !  
Through the caverns hollow,  
As the song floats thou pursue,  
Where the wild bee never flew,  
Through the noon-tide darkness deep,  
By the odour-breathing sleep  
Of faint night flowers, and the waves  
At the fountain-lighted caves,  
While our music, wild and sweet,  
Mocks thy gently falling feet,  
Child of Ocean !

ASIA

Shall we pursue the sound ? It grows more faint  
And distant.

## PANTHEA

List ! the strain floats nearer now.

## ECHOES

In the world unknown  
 Sleeps a voice unspoken ;  
 By thy step alone  
 Can its rest be broken ;  
 Child of Ocean !

## ASIA

How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind !

## ECHOES

O, follow, follow !  
 Through the caverns hollow,  
 As the song floats thou pursue,  
 By the woodland noon-tide dew ;  
 By the forests, lakes, and fountains  
 Through the many-folded mountains ;  
 To the rents, and gulphs, and chasms,  
 Where the Earth reposed from spasms,  
 On the day when He and thou  
 Parted, to commingle now ;  
 Child of Ocean !

## ASIA

Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,  
 And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II. *A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns. ASIA and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.*

## SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS

The path through which that lovely twain  
 Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,

And each dark tree that ever grew,  
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue ;  
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,  
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,  
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,  
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,  
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,  
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers  
Of the green laurel, blown anew ;  
And bends, and then fades silently,  
One frail and fair anemone :  
Or when some star of many a one  
That climbs and wanders through steep night,  
Has found the cleft through which alone  
Beams fall from high those depths upon  
Ere it is borne away, away,  
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,  
It scatters drops of golden light,  
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :  
And the gloom divine is all around ;  
And underneath is the mossy ground.

## SEMICHORUS II

There the voluptuous nightingales,  
Are awake through all the broad noon-day.  
When one with bliss or sadness fails,  
And through the windless ivy-boughs,  
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away  
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;  
Another from the swinging blossom,  
Watching to catch the languid close  
Of the last strain, then lifts on high  
The wings of the weak melody,  
'Till some new strain of feeling bear  
The song, and all the woods are mute ;  
When there is heard through the dim air  
The rush of wings, and rising there

Like many a lake-surrounded flute,  
Sounds overflow the listener's brain  
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

## SEMICHORUS I

There those enchanted eddies play  
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,  
By Demogorgon's mighty law,  
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,  
All spirits on that secret way ;  
As inland boats are driven to Ocean  
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :  
And first there comes a gentle sound  
To those in talk or slumber bound,  
And wakes the destined. Soft emotion  
Attracts, impels them : those who saw  
Say from the breathing earth behind  
There steams a plume-uplifting wind  
Which drives them on their path, while they  
Believe their own swift wings and feet  
The sweet desires within obey :  
And so they float upon their way,  
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,  
The storm of sound is driven along,  
Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet  
Behind, its gathering billows meet  
And to the fatal mountain bear  
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

## FIRST FAUN

Canst thou imagine where those spirits live  
Which make such delicate music in the woods ?  
We haunt within the least frequented caves  
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,  
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :  
Where may they hide themselves ?

## SECOND FAUN

'Tis hard to tell :

I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,  
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun  
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave  
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,  
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float  
Under the green and golden atmosphere  
Which noon-tide kindles through the woven leaves ;  
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,  
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,  
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,  
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,  
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire  
Under the waters of the earth again.

## FIRST FAUN

If such live thus, have others other lives,  
Under pink blossoms or within the bells  
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,  
Or on their dying odours, when they die,  
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew ?

## SECOND FAUN

Aye, many more which we may well divine.  
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,  
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,  
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs  
Of fate, and chance, and God, and Chaos old,  
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,  
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth  
One brotherhood : delightful strains which cheer  
Our solitary twilights, and which charm  
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III. *A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.*  
ASIA and PANTHEA

PANTHEA

Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm  
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,  
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,  
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up  
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,  
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,  
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain  
To deep intoxication ; and uplift,  
Like Mænads who cry aloud, Evoe ! Evoe !  
The voice which is contagion to the world.

ASIA

Fit throne for such a Power ! Magnificent !  
How glorious art thou, Earth ! And if thou be  
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,  
Though evil stain its work, and it should be  
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,  
I could fall down and worship that and thee.  
Even now my heart adareth : Wonderful !  
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain :  
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,  
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,  
With azure waves which burst in silver light,  
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on  
Under the curdling winds, and islanding  
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,  
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,  
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,  
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;  
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains  
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling  
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,  
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,  
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.



The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl  
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,  
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,  
Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !  
The sun-awakened avalanche ! whose mass,  
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there  
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds  
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth  
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,  
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

## PANTHEA

Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking  
In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises  
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon  
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

## ASIA

The fragments of the cloud are scattered up ;  
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;  
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain  
Grows dizzy ; I see thin shapes within the mist.

## PANTHEA

A countenance with beckoning smiles : there burns  
An azure fire within its golden locks !  
Another and another : hark ! they speak !

## SONG OF SPIRITS

To the deep, to the deep,  
Down, down !  
Through the shade of sleep,  
Through the cloudy strife  
Of Death and of Life ;  
Through the veil and the bar  
Of things which seem and are  
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,  
Down, down !

While the sound whirls around,  
Down, down !  
As the fawn draws the hound,  
As the lightning the vapour,  
As a weak moth the taper ;  
Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;  
Time both ; to-day, to-morrow ;  
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,  
Down, down !

Through the grey, void abysm,  
Down, down !  
Where the air is no prism,  
And the moon and stars are not,  
And the cavern-crag wears not  
The radiance of Heaven,  
Nor the gloom to Earth given,  
Where there is one pervading, one alone,  
Down, down !

In the depth of the deep  
Down, down !  
Like veiled lightning asleep,  
Like the spark nursed in embers,  
The last look Love remembers,  
Like a diamond, which shines  
On the dark wealth of mines,  
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.  
Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee ;  
Down, down !  
With the bright form beside thee ;  
Resist not the weakness,  
Such strength is in meekness  
That the Eternal, the Immortal,  
Must unloose through life's portal  
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne  
By that alone.

SCENE IV. *The Cave of DEMOGORGON.* ASIA and  
PANTHEA

PANTHEA

What veiled form sits on that ebon throne ?

ASIA

The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA

I see a mighty darkness  
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom  
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,  
Ungazed upon and shapeless ; neither limb,  
Nor form, nor outline ; yet we feel it is  
A living Spirit.

DEMOGORGON

Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA

What canst thou tell ?

DEMOGORGON

All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA

Who made the living world ?

DEMOGORGON

God.

ASIA

Who made all

That it contains ? thought, passion, reason, will,  
Imagination ?

DEMOGORGON

God : Almighty God.

ASIA

Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring

In rarest visitation, or the voice  
 Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,  
 Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim  
 The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,  
 And leaves this peopled earth a solitude  
 When it returns no more ?

DEMOGORGON

Merciful God.

ASIA

And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,  
 Which from the links of the great chain of things,  
 To every thought within the mind of man  
 Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels  
 Under the load towards the pit of death ;  
 Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate ;  
 And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood ;  
 Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech  
 Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day ;  
 And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell ?

DEMOGORGON

He reigns.

ASIA

Utter his name ; a world pining in pain  
 Asks but his name : curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON

He reigns.

ASIA

I feel, I know it ; who ?

DEMOGORGON

He reigns.

ASIA

Who reigns ? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,  
 And Light and Love ; then Saturn, from whose throne

Time fell, an envious shadow : such the state  
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,  
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves  
Before the wind or sun has withered them,  
And semivital worms ; but he refused  
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,  
The skill which wields the elements, the thought  
Which pierces this dim universe like light,  
Self-empire, and the majesty of love ;  
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus  
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,  
And with this law alone, " Let man be free,"  
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.  
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law ; to be  
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign ;  
And Jove now reigned ; for on the race of man  
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,  
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,  
Fell ; and the unseasonable seasons drove  
With alternating shafts of frost and fire  
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves :  
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,  
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle  
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,  
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.  
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes  
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,  
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,  
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings  
The shape of Death ; and Love he sent to bind  
The disunited tendrils of that vine  
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart ;  
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,  
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath  
The frown of man ; and tortured to his will  
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,  
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms  
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,  
Which is the measure of the universe ;  
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,  
Which shook, but fell not ; and the harmonious mind  
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song ;  
And music lifted up the listening spirit  
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,  
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound ;  
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,  
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,  
The human form, till marble grew divine ;  
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see  
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.  
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,  
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.  
He taught the implicated orbits woven  
Of the wide-wandering stars ; and how the sun  
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell  
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye  
Gazes not on the interlunar sea :  
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,  
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,  
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then  
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed  
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,  
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.  
Such, the alleviations of his state,  
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs  
Withering in destined pain : but who reigns down  
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while  
Man looks on his creation like a God  
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on  
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,  
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone ?  
Not Jove : while yet his frown shook heaven, aye, when  
His adversary from adamant chains  
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare  
Who is his master ? Is he too a slave ?

DEMOGORGON

All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil :  
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA

Whom calledst thou God ?

DEMOGORGON

I spoke but as ye speak,  
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA

Who is the master of the slave ?

DEMOGORGON

If the abysm  
Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice  
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;  
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze  
On the revolving world ? What to bid speak  
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change ? To these  
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA

So much I asked before, and my heart gave  
The response thou hast given ; and of such truths  
Each to itself must be the oracle.  
One more demand ; and do thou answer me  
As mine own soul would answer, did it know  
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise  
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world :  
When shall the destined hour arrive ?

DEMOGORGON

Behold !

ASIA

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night  
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds

Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands  
 A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.  
 Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,  
 And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :  
 Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink  
 With eager lips the wind of their own speed,  
 As if the thing they loved fled on before,  
 And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks  
 Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all  
 Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON

These are the immortal Hours,  
 Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA

A spirit with a dreadful countenance  
 Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.  
 Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,  
 Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me?  
 Speak!

SPIRIT

I am the shadow of a destiny  
 More dread than is my aspect : ere yon planet  
 Has set, the darkness which ascends with me  
 Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

ASIA

What meanest thou?

PANTHEA

That terrible shadow floats  
 Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke  
 Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.  
 Lo ! it ascends the car ; the coursers fly  
 Terrified : watch its path among the stars  
 Blackening the night !

ASIA

Thus I am answered : strange !



## PANTHEA

See, near the verge, another chariot stays ;  
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,  
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim  
Of delicate strange tracery ; the young spirit  
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope ;  
How its soft smiles attract the soul ! as light  
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

## SPIRIT

My coursers are fed with the lightning,  
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,  
And when the red morning is bright'ning  
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam ;  
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,  
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire : and their speed makes night kindle ;  
I fear : they outstrip the Typhoon ;  
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle  
We encircle the earth and the moon :  
We shall rest from long labours at noon :  
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V. *The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top  
of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, and the  
SPIRIT OF THE HOUR

## SPIRIT

On the brink of the night and the morning  
My coursers are wont to respire ;  
But the Earth has just whispered a warning  
That their flight must be swifter than fire :  
They shall drink the hot speed of desire !

ASIA

Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath  
Would give them swifter speed.

SPIRIT

Alas ! it could not.

PANTHEA

Oh Spirit ! pause, and tell whence is the light  
Which fills the cloud ? the sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT

The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo  
Is held in heaven by wonder ; and the light  
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue  
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,  
Flows from thy mighty sister.

PANTHEA

Yes, I feel—

ASIA

What is it with thee, sister ? Thou art pale.

PANTHEA

How thou art changed ! I dare not look on thee ;  
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure  
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change  
Is working in the elements, which suffer  
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell  
That on the day when the clear hyaline  
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand  
Within a veined shell, which floated on  
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,  
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores  
Which bear thy name ; love, like the atmosphere  
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,  
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven  
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves

And all that dwells within them ; till grief cast  
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came :  
Such art thou now ; nor is it I alone,  
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,  
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.  
Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love  
Of all articulate beings ? Feel'st thou not  
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee ? List !  
(*Music.*)

## ASIA

Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his  
Whose echoes they are : yet all love is sweet,  
Given or returned. Common as light is love,  
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.  
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,  
It makes the reptile equal to the God :  
They who inspire it most are fortunate,  
As I am now ; but those who feel it most  
Are happier still, after long sufferings,  
As I shall soon become.

## PANTHEA

List ! Spirits speak.

VOICE *in the Air, singing*

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle  
With their love the breath between them ;  
And thy smiles before they dwindle  
Make the cold air fire ; then screen them  
In those looks, where whoso gazes  
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning  
Through the vest which seems to hide them ;  
As the radiant lines of morning  
Through the clouds ere they divide them ;  
And this atmosphere divinest  
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee,  
But thy voice sounds low and tender  
Like the fairest, for it folds thee  
From the sight, that liquid splendour,  
And all feel, yet see thee never,  
As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest  
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,  
And the souls of whom thou lovest  
Walk upon the winds with lightness,  
Till they fail, as I am failing,  
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

## ASIA

My soul is an enchanted boat,  
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float  
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing ;  
And thine doth like an angel sit  
Beside a helm conducting it,  
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.  
It seems to float ever, for ever,  
Upon that many-winding river,  
Between mountains, woods, abysses,  
A paradise of wildernesses !  
Till, like one in slumber bound,  
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,  
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound :

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions  
In music's most serene dominions ;  
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.  
And we sail on, away, afar,  
Without a course, without a star,  
But by the instinct of sweet music driven ;  
Till through Elysian garden islets  
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,

Where never mortal pinnacle glided,  
The boat of my desire is guided :  
Realms where the air we breathe is love,  
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,  
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,  
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,  
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray :  
Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee  
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,  
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day ;  
A paradise of vaulted bowers,  
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,  
And watery paths that wind between  
Wildernesses calm and green,  
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,  
And rest, having beheld ; somewhat like thee ;  
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously !

## END OF THE SECOND ACT

## ACT III

SCENE I. *Heaven.* JUPITER *on his Throne* ; THETIS  
*and the other Deities assembled*

## JUPITER

Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share  
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,  
Rejoice ! henceforth I am omnipotent.  
All else had been subdued to me ; alone  
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,  
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach and  
doubt,  
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,

Hurling up insurrection, which might make  
Our antique empire insecure, though built  
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear ;  
And though my curses through the pendulous air,  
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,  
And cling to it ; though under my wrath's might  
It climb the crags of life, step after step,  
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,  
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,  
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall :  
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,  
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,  
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,  
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne  
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs  
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,  
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,  
And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,  
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine  
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,  
As dew from earth under the twilight stars :  
Drink ! be the nectar circling through your veins  
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,  
Till exultation burst in one wide voice  
Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou  
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light  
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,  
Thetis, bright image of eternity !  
When thou didst cry, " Insufferable might !  
God ! Spare me ! I sustain not the quick flames,  
The penetrating presence ; all my being,  
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw  
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,  
Sinking through its foundations : " even then  
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third

Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,  
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,  
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,  
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels  
Gridding the winds ?) from Demogorgon's throne.  
Victory ! victory ! Feel'st thou not, O world,  
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up  
Olympus ?

[*The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON  
descends, and moves towards the Throne of  
JUPITER.*

Awful shape, what art thou ? Speak !

DEMOGORGON

Eternity. Demand no direr name.  
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.  
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child ;  
Mightier than thee : and we must dwell together  
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.  
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,  
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee :  
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny  
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,  
Put forth thy might.

JUPITER

Detested prodigy !

Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons  
I trample thee ! thou lingerest ?

Mercy ! mercy !

No pity, no release, no respite ! Oh,  
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,  
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,  
On Caucasus ! he would not doom me thus.  
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not  
The monarch of the world ? What then art thou ?  
No refuge ! no appeal !

Sink with me then,  
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,

Even as a vulture and a snake outspent  
 Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,  
 Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock  
 Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,  
 And whelm on them into the bottomless void  
 This desolated world, and thee, and me,  
 The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck  
 Of that for which they combated.

Ai ! Ai !

The elements obey me not. I sink  
 Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.  
 And, like a cloud, mine enemy above  
 Darkens my fall with victory ! Ai, Ai !

SCENE II. *The Mouth of a great River in the Island  
 Atlantis. OCEAN is discovered reclining near the  
 Shore ; APOLLO stands beside him*

OCEAN

He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown ?

APOLLO

Aye, when the strife was ended which made dim  
 The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,  
 The terrors of his eye illumined heaven  
 With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts  
 Of the victorious darkness, as he fell :  
 Like the last glare of day's red agony,  
 Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,  
 Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN

He sunk to the abyss ? To the dark void ?

APOLLO

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud  
 On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings



Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes  
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded  
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail  
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length  
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.

## OCEAN

Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea  
Which are my realm will heave, unstained with blood,  
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn  
Swayed by the summer air ; my streams will flow  
Round many-peopled continents, and round  
Fortunate isles ; and from their glassy thrones  
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark  
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see  
The floating bark of the light-laden moon  
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,  
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea ;  
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,  
And desolation, and the mingled voice  
Of slavery and command ; but by the light  
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,  
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,  
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

## APOLLO

And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make  
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse  
Darkens the sphere I guide ; but list, I hear  
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit  
That sits i' the morning star.

## OCEAN

Thou must away ;  
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell :  
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it  
With azure calm out of the emerald urns  
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.

Behold the Nereids under the green sea,  
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,  
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair  
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,  
 Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

*(A sound of waves is heard.)*

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.  
 Peace, monster ; I come now. Farewell.

APOLLO

Farewell.

SCENE III. *Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE,  
*the EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, and PANTHEA, borne in*  
*the Car with the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR*

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends*

HERCULES

Most glorious among spirits, thus doth strength  
 To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,  
 And thee, who art the form they animate,  
 Minister like a slave.

PROMETHEUS

Thy gentle words  
 Are sweeter even than freedom long desired  
 And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,  
 Shadow of beauty unbeheld : and ye,  
 Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain  
 Sweet to remember, through your love and care :  
 Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,  
 All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,  
 Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,  
 And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain  
 Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.

From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears  
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,  
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light :  
And there is heard the ever-moving air,  
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,  
And bees ; and all around are mossy seats,  
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass ;  
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;  
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,  
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.  
What can hide man from mutability ?  
And if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,  
Ione, shalt chaunt fragments of sea-music,  
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away  
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.  
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams  
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make  
Strange combinations out of common things,  
Like human babes in their brief innocence ;  
And we will search, with looks and words of love,  
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,  
Our unexhausted spirits ; and like lutes  
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,  
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,  
From difference sweet where discord cannot be ;  
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,  
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees  
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,  
At their known island-homes in Himera,  
The echoes of the human world, which tell  
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,  
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,  
Itself the echo of the heart, and all  
That tempers or improves man's life, now free ;  
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,  
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright  
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms  
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them

The gathered rays which are reality,  
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal  
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,  
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.  
The wandering voices and the shadows these  
Of all that man becomes, the mediators  
Of that best worship love, by him and us  
Given and returned ; swift shapes and sounds, which grow  
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,  
And veil by veil, evil and error fall :  
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

*(Turning to the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.)*

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,  
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old  
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it  
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou  
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

IONE

Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely  
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell ;  
See the pale azure fading into silver  
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light :  
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

SPIRIT

It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean :  
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

PROMETHEUS

Go, borne over the cities of mankind  
On whirlwind-footed coursers : once again  
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world ;  
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,  
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,  
Loosening its mighty music ; it shall be  
As thunder mingled with clear echoes : then  
Return ; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.  
And thou, O, Mother Earth !—

## THE EARTH

I hear, I feel ;

Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down  
Even to the adamantine central gloom  
Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,  
And through my withered, old, and icy frame  
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down  
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair  
Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,  
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,  
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,  
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,  
Draining the poison of despair, shall take  
And interchange sweet nutriment ; to me  
Shall they become like sister-antelopes  
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,  
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.  
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float  
Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers  
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :  
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather  
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :  
And death shall be the last embrace of her  
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother  
Folding her child, says, " Leave me not again."

## ASIA

Oh, mother ! wherefore speak the name of death ?  
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,  
Who die ?

## THE EARTH

It would avail not to reply :

Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known  
But to the uncommunicating dead.

Death is the veil which those who live call life :  
They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile  
In mild variety the seasons mild

With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,  
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,  
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's  
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain  
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,  
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, aye, even  
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,  
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.  
And thou ! There is a cavern where my spirit  
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain  
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it  
Became mad too, and built a temple there,  
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured  
The erring nations round to mutual war,  
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee ;  
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds  
A violet's exhalation, and it fills  
With a serener light and crimson air  
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around ;  
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,  
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,  
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms  
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,  
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes  
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,  
And through their veinèd leaves and amber stems  
The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls  
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,  
The drink of spirits : and it circles round,  
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,  
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,  
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.  
Arise ! Appear !

*(A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.)*

This is my torch-bearer ;  
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing  
On eyes from which he kindled it anew  
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,

For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,  
And guide this company beyond the peak  
Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,  
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,  
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes  
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,  
And up the green ravine, across the vale,  
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,  
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,  
The image of a temple, built above,  
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,  
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,  
And populous most with living imagery,  
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles  
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.  
It is deserted now, but once it bore  
Thy name, Prometheus ; there the emulous youths  
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom  
The lamp which was thine emblem ; even as those  
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope  
Into the grave, across the night of life,  
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly  
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.  
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV. *A Forest. In the Background a Cave.*  
PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the*  
SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE

Sister, it is not earthly : how it glides  
Under the leaves ! how on its head there burns  
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams  
Are twined with its fair hair ! how, as it moves,  
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass !  
Knowest thou it ?

## PANTHEA

It is the delicate spirit  
 That guides the earth through heaven. From afar  
 The populous constellations call that light  
 The loveliest of the planets ; and sometimes  
 It floats along the spray of the salt sea,  
 Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,  
 Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,  
 Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,  
 Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,  
 Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned  
 It loved our sister Asia, and it came  
 Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light  
 Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted  
 As one bit by a dipsas, and with her  
 It made its childish confidence, and told her  
 All it had known or seen, for it saw much,  
 Yet idly reasoned what it saw ; and called her,—  
 For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,—  
 “ Mother, dear mother.”

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH (*running to ASIA*)

Mother, dearest mother ;  
 May I then talk with thee as I was wont ?  
 May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,  
 After thy looks have made them tired of joy ?  
 May I then play beside thee the long noons,  
 When work is none in the bright silent air ?

## ASIA

I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth  
 Can cherish thee unenvied : speak, I pray :  
 Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

## SPIRIT OF THE EARTH

Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child  
 Cannot be wise like thee, within this day ;



And happier too ; happier and wiser both.  
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,  
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs  
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever  
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world :  
And that, among the haunts of humankind,  
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,  
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,  
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,  
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts  
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man ;  
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,  
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,  
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee,)  
When false or frowning made me sick at heart  
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.  
Well, my path lately lay through a great city  
Into the woody hills surrounding it :  
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate :  
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook  
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet  
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all ;  
A long, long sound, as it would never end :  
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly  
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,  
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet  
The music pealed along. I hid myself  
Within a fountain in the public square,  
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon  
Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon  
Those ugly human shapes and visages  
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,  
Passed floating through the air, and fading still  
Into the winds that scattered them ; and those  
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms  
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all  
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise  
And greetings of delighted wonder, all

Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn  
 Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and  
     efts,

Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,  
 And that with little change of shape or hue :  
 All things had put their evil nature off :  
 I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake  
 Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,  
 I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward  
 And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,  
 With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay  
 Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;  
 So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,  
 We meet again, the happiest change of all.

ASIA

And never will we part, till thy chaste sister  
 Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon  
 Will look on thy more warm and equal light  
 Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow  
 And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH

What ; as Asia loves Prometheus ?

ASIA

Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.  
 Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes  
 To multiply your lovely selves, and fill  
 With spherèd fires the interlunar air ?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH

Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp  
 'Tis hard I should go darkling.

ASIA

Listen ; look !

*The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters*

## PROMETHEUS

We feel what thou hast heard and seen : yet speak.

## SPIRIT OF THE HOUR

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled  
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,  
There was a change : the impalpable thin air  
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,  
As if the sense of love dissolved in them  
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.  
My vision then grew clear, and I could see  
Into the mysteries of the universe :  
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,  
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,  
My coursers sought their birth-place in the sun,  
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil  
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire.  
And where my moonlike car will stand within  
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms  
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,  
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel ;  
In memory of the tidings it has borne ;  
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,  
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,  
And open to the bright and liquid sky.  
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake  
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock  
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,  
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue  
When all remains untold which ye would hear ?  
As I have said I floated to the earth :  
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss  
To move, to breathe, to be ; I wandering went  
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,  
And first was disappointed not to see  
Such mighty change as I had felt within  
Expressed in outward things ; but soon I looked,  
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked

One with the other even as spirits do,  
None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear, .  
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows,  
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,  
“ All hope abandon ye who enter here ; ”  
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear  
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,  
Until the subject of the tyrant's will  
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,  
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.  
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines  
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak ;  
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart  
The sparks of love and hope till there remained  
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,  
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,  
Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;  
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk  
Which makes the heart deny the yes it breathes,  
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy  
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.  
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind  
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew  
On the wide earth, passed ; gentle radiant forms,  
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;  
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,  
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,  
And changed to all which once they dared not be,  
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,  
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,  
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,  
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons ; wherein,  
And beside which, by wretched men were borne  
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes  
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,  
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,

The ghosts of a no more remembered fame,  
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth  
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs  
Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round  
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests,  
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide  
As is the world it wasted, and are now  
But an astonishment ; even so the tools .  
And emblems of its last captivity,  
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,  
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.  
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,  
Which, under many a name and many a form  
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,  
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;  
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served  
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love  
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,  
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,  
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,  
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :  
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,  
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,  
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside ;  
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man  
Passionless ; no, yet free from guilt or pain,  
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,  
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves.  
From chance, and death, and mutability,  
The clogs of that which else might oversoar  
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,  
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

## ACT IV

SCENE. *A Part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

VOICE of unseen Spirits

The pale stars are gone !

For the sun, their swift shepherd,

To their folds them compelling,

In the depths of the dawn,

Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee

Beyond his blue dwelling,

As fawns flee the leopard.

But where are ye ?

*A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly,  
singing*

Here, oh, here :

We bear the bier

Of the Father of many a cancelled year !

Spectres we

Of the dead Hours be,

We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew

Hair, not yew !

Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew !

Be the faded flowers

Of Death's bare bowers

Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours !

Haste, oh, haste !

As shades are chased,

Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.

We melt away,

Like dissolving spray,  
From the children of a diviner day,  
With the lullaby  
Of winds that die  
On the bosom of their own harmony !

IONE

What dark forms were they ?

PANTHEA

The past Hours weak and grey,  
With the spoil which their toil  
Raked together  
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE

Have they passed ?

PANTHEA

They have passed ;  
They outspeeded the blast,—  
While 'tis said, they are fled :

IONE

Whither, oh, whither ?

PANTHEA

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE of *unseen Spirits*

Bright clouds float in heaven,  
Dew-stars gleam on earth,  
Waves assemble on ocean,  
They are gathered and driven  
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee !  
They shake with emotion,  
They dance in their mirth.  
But where are ye ?

The pine boughs are singing  
 Old songs with new gladness,  
 The billows and fountains  
 Fresh music are flinging,  
 Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea ;  
 The storms mock the mountains  
 With the thunder of gladness.  
 But where are ye ?

IONE

What charioteers are these ?

PANTHEA

Where are their chariots ?

SEMICHORUS OF HOURS

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth  
 Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep  
 Which covered our being and darkened our birth  
 In the deep.

A VOICE

In the deep ?

SEMICHORUS II

Oh, below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I

An hundred ages we had been kept  
 Cradled in visions of hate and care,  
 And each one who waked as his brother slept,  
 Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II

Worse than his visions were !

SEMICHORUS I

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep ;  
 We have known the voice of Love in dreams,  
 We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—



## SEMICHORUS II

As the billows leap in the morning beams !

## CHORUS

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,  
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,  
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,  
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds  
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,  
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds  
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure  
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,  
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,  
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

## A VOICE

Unite !

## PANTHEA

See, where the Spirits of the human mind  
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

## CHORUS OF SPIRITS

We join the throng  
Of the dance and the song,  
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along ;  
As the flying-fish leap  
From the Indian deep,  
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

## CHORUS OF HOURS

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,  
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,  
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,  
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not ?

## CHORUS OF SPIRITS

We come from the mind  
Of human kind  
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind ;  
Now 'tis an ocean  
Of clear emotion,  
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss  
Of wonder and bliss,  
Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;  
From those skiey towers  
Where Thought's crowned powers  
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours !

From the dim recesses  
Of woven caresses,  
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;  
From the azure isles,  
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,  
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high  
Of Man's ear and eye,  
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy ;  
From the murmurings  
Of the unsealed springs  
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,  
Through blood, and tears,  
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears,  
We waded and flew,  
And the islets were few  
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,  
Are sandalled with calm,  
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;

And, beyond our eyes,  
The human love lies  
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

## CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;  
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,  
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,  
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,  
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by  
To an ocean of splendour and harmony !

## CHORUS OF SPIRITS

Our spoil is won,  
Our task is done,  
We are free to dive, or soar, or run ;  
Beyond and around,  
Or within the bound  
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes  
Of the starry skies  
Into the hoar deep to colonize :  
Death, Chaos, and Night,  
From the sound of our flight,  
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,  
And the Spirit of Might,  
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight ;  
And Love, Thought, and Breath,  
The Powers that quell Death,  
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build  
In the void's loose field  
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield ;  
We will take our plan  
From the new world of man,  
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

## CHORUS OF HOURS

Break the dance, and scatter the song ;  
 Let some depart, and some remain.

## SEMICHORUS I

We, beyond heaven, are driven along :

## SEMICHORUS II

Us the enchantments of earth retain :

## SEMICHORUS I

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,  
 With the Spirits which build a new earth <sup>irsd</sup> sea,  
 And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

## SEMICHORUS II

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,  
 Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,  
 With the powers of a world of perfect light.

## SEMICHORUS I

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,  
 Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear  
 From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

## SEMICHORUS II

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,  
 And the happy forms of its death and birth  
 Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

## CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS

Break the dance, and scatter the song,  
 Let some depart, and some remain,  
 Wherever we fly we lead along  
 In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,  
 The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA

Ha ! they are gone !

IONE

Yet feel you no delight  
From the past sweetness ?

PANTHEA

As the bare green hill  
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,  
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water  
To the unpavilioned sky !

IONE

Even whilst we speak  
New notes arise. What is that awful sound ?

PANTHEA

'Tis the deep music of the rolling world  
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,  
Æolian modulations.

IONE

Listen too,  
How every pause is filled with under-notes,  
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,  
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,  
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air  
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

PANTHEA

But see where through two openings in the forest  
Which hanging branches overcanopy,  
And where two runnels of a rivulet,  
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,  
Have made their path of melody, like sisters  
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,  
Turning their dear disunion to an isle

Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts ;  
Two visions of strange radiance float upon  
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,  
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet  
Under the ground and through the windless air.

## IONE

I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,  
In which the mother of the months is borne  
By ebbing night into her western cave,  
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,  
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy  
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods  
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,  
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass ;  
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,  
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm  
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea  
When the sun rushes under it ; they roll  
And move and grow as with an inward wind ;  
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white  
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,  
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,  
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds  
Of its white robe, woof of ætherial pearl.  
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light  
Scattered in strings ; yet its two eyes are heavens  
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity  
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured  
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,  
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,  
With fire that is not brightness ; in its hand  
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point  
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow  
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll  
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,  
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

## PANTHEA

And from the other opening in the wood  
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,  
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,  
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass  
Flow, as through empty space, music and light :  
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,  
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,  
Sphere within sphere ; and every space between  
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,  
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,  
Yet each inter-transpicious, and they whirl  
Over each other with a thousand motions,  
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,  
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,  
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,  
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,  
Intelligible words and music wild.  
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb  
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist  
Of elemental subtlety, like light ;  
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,  
The music of the living grass and air,  
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams  
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,  
Seem kneaded into one ærial mass  
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,  
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,  
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,  
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,  
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,  
And you can see its little lips are moving,  
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,  
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

## IONE

'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

## PANTHEA

And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,  
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears  
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwin'd,  
Embleming heaven and earth united now,  
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel  
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,  
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,  
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,  
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,  
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart ;  
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,  
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,  
And caverns on crystalline columns poised  
With vegetable silver overspread ;  
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs  
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,  
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops  
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on  
And make appear the melancholy ruins  
Of cancelled cycles ; anchors, beaks of ships ;  
Planks turned to marble ; quivers, helms, and spears,  
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels  
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry  
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,  
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems  
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin !  
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,  
Whose population which the earth grew over  
Was mortal, but not human ; see, they lie,  
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,  
Their statues, homes and fanes ; prodigious shapes  
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,  
Jammed in the hard, black deep ; and over these,  
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,  
And fishes which were isles of living scale,  
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around



The iron crags, or within heaps of dust  
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs  
Had crushed the iron crags ; and over these  
The jagged alligator, and the might  
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once  
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,  
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,  
Increased and multiplied like summer worms  
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe  
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloke, and they  
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished ; or some God  
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried  
Be not ! And like my words they were no more.

#### THE EARTH

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness !  
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,  
The vapourous exultation not to be confined !  
Ha ! ha ! the animation of delight  
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,  
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

#### THE MOON

Brother mine, calm wanderer,  
Happy globe of land and air,  
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,  
Which penetrates my frozen frame,  
And passes with the warmth of flame,  
With love, and odour, and deep melody  
Through me, through me !

#### THE EARTH

Ha ! ha ! the caverns of my hollow mountains,  
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains  
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.  
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,  
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,  
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,  
Who all our green and azure universe  
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction,  
    sending  
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,  
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,  
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending :  
    Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,  
    Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,  
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow,  
    and fire ;  
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom  
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,  
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up  
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup  
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;  
And from beneath, around, within, above,  
Filling thy void annihilation, love  
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

#### THE MOON

The snow upon my lifeless mountains  
Is loosened into living fountains,  
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :  
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,  
It clothes with unexpected birth  
My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine  
    On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know  
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,  
And living shapes upon my bosom move :  
Music is in the sea and air,  
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,  
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :  
    'Tis love, all love !

## THE EARTH

It interpenetrates my granite mass,  
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,  
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;  
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,  
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,  
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison  
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen  
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :  
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver  
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,  
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows,  
fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,  
Which could distort to many a shape of error,  
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;  
Which over all his kind as the sun's heaven  
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even  
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move.

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,  
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft  
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is  
poured ;  
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,  
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile  
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,  
Of love and might to be divided not,  
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress ;  
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,  
The unquiet republic of the maze  
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free  
wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,  
Whose nature is its own divine control,  
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;  
Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;  
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove  
Sport like tame beasts,—none knew how gentle they  
could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,  
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,  
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,  
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm  
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,  
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass  
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass ;  
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their  
children wear ;  
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,  
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng  
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shape-  
less were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep  
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep  
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !  
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ;  
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,  
Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me ; I have  
none.

#### THE MOON

The shadow of white death has passed.  
From my path in heaven at last,  
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;  
And through my newly-woven bowers,  
Wander happy paramours,  
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep  
Thy vales more deep.

## THE EARTH

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold  
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,  
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,  
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,  
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray  
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

## THE MOON

Thou art folded, thou art lying  
In the light which is undying  
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;  
All suns and constellations shower  
On thee a light, a life, a power  
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine  
On mine, on mine !

## THE EARTH

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,  
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,  
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;  
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,  
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,  
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth  
keep.

## THE MOON

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,  
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,  
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;  
So when thy shadow falls on me,  
Then am I mute and still, by thee  
Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,  
Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun  
Brightest world of many a one ;

Green and azure sphere which shinest  
With a light which is divinest  
Among all the lamps of Heaven  
To whom life and light is given ;  
I, thy crystal paramour  
Borne beside thee by a power  
Like the polar Paradise,  
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes ;  
I, a most enamoured maiden  
Whose weak brain is overladen  
With the pleasure of her love,  
Maniac-like around thee move  
Gazing, an insatiate bride,  
On thy form from every side  
Like a Mænad, round the cup  
Which Agave lifted up  
In the weird Cadmæan forest.  
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest  
I must hurry, whirl and follow  
Through the heavens wide and hollow,  
Sheltered by the warm embrace  
Of thy soul from hungry space,  
Drinking from thy sense and sight  
Beauty, majesty, and might,  
As a lover or a camelion  
Grows like what it looks upon,  
As a violet's gentle eye  
Gazes on the azure sky  
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,  
As a grey and watery mist  
Glowing like solid amethyst  
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,  
When the sunset sleeps  
Upon its snow.

THE EARTH

And the weak day weeps  
That it should be so.

Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight  
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light  
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,  
Through isles for ever calm ;  
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce  
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,  
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramlings fierce  
Made wounds which need thy balm.

## PANTHEA

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,  
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,  
Out of the stream of sound.

## IONE

Ah me ! sweet sister,  
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,  
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,  
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew  
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

## PANTHEA

Peace ! peace ! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,  
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky  
Is showered like night, and from within the air  
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up  
Into the pores of sunlight : the bright visions,  
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,  
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

## IONE

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

## PANTHEA

An universal sound like words : Oh, list !

## DEMOGORGON

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,  
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,

Beautiful orb ! gathering as thou dost roll  
 The love which paves thy path along the skies :

## THE EARTH

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

## DEMOGORGON

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth  
 With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;  
 Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth  
 Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

## THE MOON

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

## DEMOGORGON

Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,  
 Ætherial Dominations, who possess  
 Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes  
 Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A VOICE *from above*

Our great Republic hears, we are bless'd, and bless.

## DEMOGORGON

Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse  
 Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,  
 Whether your nature is that universe  
 Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE *from beneath*

Or as they  
 Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

## DEMOGORGON

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes  
 From man's high mind even to the central stone  
 Of sullen lead ; from Heaven's star-fretted domes  
 To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on :



## A CONFUSED VOICE

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

## DEMOGORGON

Spirits, whose homes are flesh : ye beasts and birds,  
Ye worms, and fish ; ye living leaves and buds ;  
Lightning and wind ; and ye untameable herds,  
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes :

## A VOICE

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

## DEMOGORGON

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;  
A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ;  
A traveller from the cradle to the grave  
Through the dim night of this immortal day :

## ALL

Speak : thy strong words may never pass away.

## DEMOGORGON

This is the day, which down the void abysm  
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,  
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep :  
Love, from its awful throne of patient power  
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour  
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,  
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs  
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance  
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;  
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,  
Mother of many acts and hours, should free

The serpent that would clasp her with his length ;  
These are the spells by which to re-assume  
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;  
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

ADONAIIS  
AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF  
JOHN KEATS



## PREFACE

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, τοτὶ σὸν στόμα, φάρμακον εἶδες·  
Πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτέδραμε, κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη ;  
Τίς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος ἦ κεράσαι τοι,  
Ἥ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον ; ἔκφυγεν ᾧδάν.

MOSCHUS, *Epitaph. Bion.*

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled proves at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of — 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and, where cankerworms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in *The Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible

mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one like Keats's, composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to *Endymion*,—was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, *Paris*, and *Woman*, and *A Syrian Tale*, and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who, in their venal good nature, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the Elegy was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his

fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness, by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, “almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend.” Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from “such stuff as dreams are made of.” His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name !

## ADONAIS

*Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἑλαμπες ἐνὶ ζώοισιν ἔως.  
Νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.*

PLATO.

### I

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !  
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears  
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !  
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years  
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,  
And teach them thine own sorrow, say : with me  
Died Adonais ; till the Future dares  
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be  
An echo and a light unto eternity.

### II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,  
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies  
In darkness ? where was lorn Urania  
When Adonais died ? With veiled eyes,  
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise  
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,  
Rekindled all the fading melodies,  
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,  
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

### III

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead !  
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !  
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed



Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,  
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;  
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair  
Descend ;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep  
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;  
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

## IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again !  
Lament anew, *Urania* !—He died,  
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,  
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,  
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,  
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite  
Of lust and blood ; he went, unterrified,  
Into the gulph of death ; but his clear Sprite  
Yet reigns o'er earth ; the third among the sons of light.

## V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !  
Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;  
And happier they their happiness who knew,  
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time  
In which suns perished ; others more sublime,  
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,  
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;  
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,  
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene  
    • abode.

## VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,  
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,  
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,  
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew ;  
Most musical of mourners, weep anew !  
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,  
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew,  
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;  
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

## VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death  
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,  
He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,  
A grave among the eternal.—Come away !  
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day  
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still  
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;  
Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill  
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

## VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—  
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,  
The shadow of white Death, and at the door  
Invisible Corruption waits to trace  
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;  
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe  
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface  
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law  
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

## IX

O, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,  
The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,  
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams  
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught  
The love which was its music, wander not,—  
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,  
But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn  
    their lot  
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,  
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

## X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,  
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries ;

“ Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;  
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,  
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies  
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.”  
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !  
She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain  
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

## XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew  
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them ;  
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw  
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,  
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;  
Another in her wilful grief would break  
Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem  
A greater loss with one which was more weak ;  
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

## XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,  
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath  
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,  
And pass into the panting heart beneath  
With lightning and with music : the damp death  
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;  
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath  
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,  
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its  
eclipse.

## XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,  
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,  
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations  
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;  
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,  
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam  
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,

Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem  
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

## XIV

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,  
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,  
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought  
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,  
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,  
Dimmed the ærial eyes that kindle day ;  
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,  
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,  
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

## XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,  
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,  
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,  
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,  
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ;  
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear  
Than those for whose disdain she pined away  
Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear  
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

## XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down  
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,  
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown  
For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?  
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear  
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both  
Thou, Adonais : wan they stand and sere  
Amid the faint companions of their youth,  
With dew all turned to tears ; odour, to sighing ruth.

## XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,  
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;

Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale  
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain  
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,  
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,  
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain  
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,  
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

## XVIII

Ah woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,  
But grief returns with the revolving year ;  
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;  
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear ;  
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;  
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,  
And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;  
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,  
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

## XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean  
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst  
As it has ever done, with change and motion  
From the great morning of the world when first  
God dawned on Chaos ; in its stream immersed  
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;  
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;  
Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight  
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

## XX

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender  
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;  
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour  
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death  
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;  
Naught we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows  
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath

By sightless lightning?—th' intense atom glows  
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

## XXI

Alas ! that all we loved of him should be,  
But for our grief, as if it had not been,  
And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !  
Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene  
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean  
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must  
borrow.  
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,  
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,  
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to  
sorrow.

## XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !  
“Wake thou,” cried Misery, “childless Mother,  
rise  
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,  
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs.”  
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,  
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song  
Had held in holy silence, cried : “Arise !”  
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,  
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

## XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs  
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear  
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,  
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,  
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear  
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania ;  
So saddened round her like an atmosphere  
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way  
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

## XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,  
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,  
And human hearts, which to her æry tread  
Yielding not, wounded the invisible  
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :  
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than  
they,  
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,  
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,  
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

## XXV

In the death chamber for a moment Death,  
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,  
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath  
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light  
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.  
“ Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,  
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !  
Leave me not ! ” cried Urania : her distress  
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her  
vain caress.

## XXVI

“ Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;  
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;  
And in my heartless breast and burning brain  
That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,  
With food of saddest memory kept alive,  
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part  
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give  
All that I am to be as thou now art !  
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart !

## XXVII

“ Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,  
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men

Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart  
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?  
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then  
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?  
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when  
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,  
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

## XXVIII

" The herded wolves, bold only to pursue ;  
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead ;  
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,  
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,  
And whose wings rain contagion ;—how they fled,  
When like Apollo, from his golden bow,  
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped  
And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow ;  
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

## XXIX

" The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;  
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then  
Is gathered into death without a dawn,  
And the immortal stars awake again ;  
So is it in the world of living men :  
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight  
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when  
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light  
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

## XXX

Thus ceased she : and the mountain shepherds came,  
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;  
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame  
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,  
An early but enduring monument,  
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song



In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent  
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,  
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

## XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,  
A phantom among men, companionless  
As the last cloud of an expiring storm  
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,  
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,  
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,  
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

## XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—  
A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power  
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift  
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;  
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak  
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower  
The killing sun smiles brightly ; on a cheek  
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may  
break.

## XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,  
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ;  
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,  
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew  
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,  
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart  
Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that  
crew  
He came the last, neglected and apart ;  
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

## XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan  
Smiled through their tears ; well knew that gentle band  
Who in another's fate now wept his own ;  
As, in the accents of an unknown land,  
He sung new sorrow ; sad Urania scanned  
The Stranger's mien, and murmured : " Who art thou ? "  
He answered not, but with a sudden hand  
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,  
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—Oh ! that it should  
be so !

## XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead ?  
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown ?  
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,  
In mockery of monumental stone,  
The heavy heart heaving without a moan ?  
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,  
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,  
Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs  
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

## XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh !  
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown  
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe ?  
The nameless worm would now itself disown :  
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone  
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,  
But what was howling in one breast alone,  
Silent with expectation of the song,  
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

## XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !  
Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,  
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !

But be thyself, and know thyself to be !  
And ever at thy season be thou free  
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow :  
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;  
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,  
And like a beaten hound, tremble thou shalt—as now.

## XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled  
Far from these carrion kites that scream below ;  
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;  
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—  
Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,  
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

## XXXIX

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—  
He hath awakened from the dream of life—  
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,  
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife  
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay  
Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief  
Convulse us and consume us day by day,  
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

## XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;  
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,  
And that unrest which men miscall delight,  
Can touch him not and torture not again ;  
From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
He is secure, and now can never mourn  
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain ;  
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,  
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

## XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;  
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn  
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee  
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;  
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !  
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air  
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown  
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare  
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

## XLII

He is made one with Nature : there is heard  
His voice in all her music, from the moan  
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;  
He is a presence to be felt and known  
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
Which has withdrawn his being to its own :  
Which wields the world with never wearied love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

## XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness  
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear  
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there  
All new successions to the forms they wear ;  
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight  
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;  
And bursting in its beauty and its might  
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

## XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time  
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;  
Like stars to their appointed height they climb

And death is a low mist which cannot blot  
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought  
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,  
And love and life contend in it, for what  
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there  
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

## XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown  
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,  
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton  
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not  
Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought  
And as he fell and as he lived and loved  
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,  
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :  
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprovèd.

## XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark  
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die  
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,  
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.  
“ Thou art become as one of us,” they cry,  
“ It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long  
Swung blind in unascended majesty,  
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.  
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng ! ”

## XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais ? oh come forth  
Fond wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.  
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth ;  
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light  
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might  
Sate the void circumference : then shrink  
Even to a point within our day and night ;  
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink  
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

## XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,  
O, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis naught  
That ages, empires, and religions there  
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;  
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not  
Glory from those who made the world their prey ;  
And he is gathered to the kings of thought  
Who waged contention with their time's decay,  
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

## XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,  
The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;  
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,  
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress  
The bones of Desolation's nakedness  
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead  
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access  
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,  
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

## L

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time  
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;  
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,  
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned  
This refuge for his memory, doth stand  
Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,  
A field is spread, on which a newer band  
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death  
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

## LI

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet  
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned  
Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,  
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,

Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find  
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,  
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind  
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.  
What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

## LII

~~The One remains, the many change and pass ;  
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly :~~  
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,  
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !  
Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,  
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak  
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

## LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart ?  
Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here  
They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !  
A light is past from the revolving year,  
And man, and woman ; and what still is dear  
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.  
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near ;  
'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,  
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

## LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move,  
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse  
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love  
Which, through the web of being blindly wove  
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,  
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

## LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,  
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
Whose sails were never to the tempest given ;  
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !  
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar :  
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.



# THE SENSITIVE PLANT



# THE SENSITIVE PLANT

## PART FIRST

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,  
Like the Spirit of Love felt every where ;  
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast  
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss  
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,  
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,  
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,  
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,  
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent  
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,  
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,  
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,  
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,  
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,  
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen  
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,  
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew  
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,  
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,  
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,  
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air  
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare :

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,  
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,  
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,  
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberosé,  
The sweetest flower for scent that blows ;  
And all rare blossoms from every clime  
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom  
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,  
With golden and green light, slanting through  
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,  
And starry river-buds glimmered by,  
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance  
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,  
Which led through the garden along and across,  
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,  
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells  
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,  
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too  
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,  
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise  
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes  
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet  
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,  
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,  
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one  
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun ;

For each one was interpenetrated  
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,  
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear  
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit  
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,  
Received more than all,—it loved more than ever  
(Where none wanted but it) could belong to the giver :

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower ;  
Radiance and odour are not its dower ;  
It loves, even like Love ; its deep heart is full ;  
It desires what it has not, the beautiful !

The light winds which from unsustaining wings  
Shed the music of many murmurings ;  
The beams which dart from many a star  
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar ;

The plumed insects swift and free,  
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,  
Laden with light and odour, which pass  
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie  
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,  
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,  
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,  
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,  
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,  
Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were  
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,  
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by  
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,  
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,  
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,  
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were  
drowned

In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;  
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress  
The light sand which paves it, consciousness ;

(Only over head the sweet nightingale  
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,  
And snatches of its Elysian chant  
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest  
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest ;  
✓ A sweet child weary of its delight,  
The feeblest and yet the favourite,  
Cradled within the embrace of night.

#### PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,  
An Eve in this Eden ; a ruling grace  
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,  
Was as God is to the starry scheme. .

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,  
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind  
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion  
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even :  
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,  
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,  
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth !

She had no companion of mortal race,  
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face  
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,  
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise :

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake  
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,  
As if yet around her he lingering were,  
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed ;  
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,  
That the coming and going of the wind  
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod,  
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod  
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,  
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet  
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ;  
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came  
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream  
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;  
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers  
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,  
And sustained them with rods and ozier bands ;  
If the flowers had been her own infants she  
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,  
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,  
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,  
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full,  
The freshest her gentle hands could pull  
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,  
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris  
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss  
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she  
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,  
~ Where butterflies dream of the life to come,  
She left clinging round the smooth and dark  
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring  
Thus moved through the garden ministering  
All the sweet season of summer tide,  
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died !

#### PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair  
Like stars when the moon is awakened were,  
Or the waves of Baiaë, ere luminous  
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.



And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant  
Felt the sound of the funeral chaunt,  
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,  
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low ;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,  
And the silent motions of passing death,  
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,  
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank ;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,  
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;  
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,  
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,  
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,  
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,  
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap  
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,  
And frost in the mist of morning rode,  
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,  
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,  
Paved the turf and the moss below,  
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,  
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue  
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,  
Leaf by leaf, day after day,  
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,  
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,  
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed ;  
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,  
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,  
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,  
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet  
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;  
And the eddies drove them here and there,  
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks,  
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;  
And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers  
Massed into ruin ; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,  
All loathliest weeds began to grow,  
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,  
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

(And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,  
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,  
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,  
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,  
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,  
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,  
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould  
Started like mist from the wet ground cold ;  
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead  
With a spirit of growth had been animated !

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,  
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,  
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes  
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water snakes.)

And hour by hour, when the air was still,  
The vapours arose which have strength to kill :  
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,  
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray  
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day  
Unseen ; every branch on which they alit  
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid  
Wept, and the tears within each lid  
Of its folded leaves which together grew  
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon  
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn ;  
The sap shrank to the root through every pore  
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came : the wind was his whip :  
One choppy finger was on his lip :  
He had torn the cataracts from the hills  
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles ;

His breath was a chain which without a sound  
The earth, and the air, and the water bound ;  
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne,  
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death  
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.  
Their decay and sudden flight from frost  
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost !

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant  
The moles and the dormice died for want :  
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air  
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain  
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again ;  
Then there steamed up a freezing dew  
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew ;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about  
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,  
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,  
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back  
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;  
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks and  
darnels,  
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

#### CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that  
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat  
Ere its outward form had known decay,  
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,  
No longer with the form combined  
Which scattered love, as stars do light,  
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess ; but in this life  
Of error, ignorance, and strife,  
Where nothing is, but all things seem,  
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet  
Pleasant if one considers it,  
To own that death itself must be,  
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that Lady fair,  
And all sweet shapes and odours there,  
In truth have never passed away :  
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,  
~~There is no death nor change :~~ their might  
Exceeds our organs, which endure  
No light, being themselves obscure.



## SHORTER POEMS





## SHORTER POEMS

### MUTABILITY

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon ;  
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,  
Streaking the darkness radiantly !—yet soon  
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever :

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings  
Give various response to each varying blast,  
To whose frail frame no second motion brings  
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep ;  
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day ;  
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep ;  
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away :

It is the same !—For, be it joy or sorrow,  
The path of its departure still is free :  
~~Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow ;~~  
Naught may endure but Mutability.

A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCH-YARD,  
LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere  
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;  
And pallid evening twines its beaming hair  
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of day :  
Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men,  
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,  
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;  
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,  
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.  
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass  
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, ærial Pile ! whose pinnacles  
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,  
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,  
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,  
Around whose lessening and invisible height  
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :  
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound  
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,  
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,  
And mingling with the still night and mute sky  
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild  
And terrorless as this serenest night :  
Here could I hope, like some enquiring child  
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight  
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep  
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

TO WORDSWORTH

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know  
 That things depart which never may return :  
 Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,  
 Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.  
 These common woes I feel. One loss is mine  
 Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.  
 Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine  
 On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :  
 Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood  
 Above the blind and battling multitude :  
 In honoured poverty thy voice did weave  
 Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—  
 Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,  
 Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

MONT BLANC

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI

I

THE everlasting universe of things  
 Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
 Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—  
 Now lending splendour, where from secret springs  
 The source of human thought its tribute brings  
 Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,  
 Such as a feeble brook will oft assume  
 In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,  
 Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,  
 Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river  
 Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

## II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—  
Thou many-coloured, many-voicèd vale,  
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail  
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams : awful scene,  
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down  
From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,  
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame  
Of lightning through the tempest ;—thou dost lie,  
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,  
Children of elder time, in whose devotion  
The chainless winds still come and ever came  
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging  
To hear—an old and solemn harmony ;  
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep  
Of the ætherial waterfall, whose veil  
Robes some unsculptured image ; the strange sleep  
Which when the voices of the desert fail  
Wraps all in its own deep eternity ;—  
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,  
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame ;  
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,  
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—  
Dizzy Ravine ! and when I gaze on thee  
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange  
To muse on my own separate phantasy,  
My own, my human mind, which passively  
Now renders and receives fast influencings,  
Holding an unremitting interchange  
With the clear universe of things around ;  
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings  
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest  
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,  
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,  
Seeking among the shadows that pass by  
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,

Some phantom, some faint image ; till the breast  
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there !

## III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world  
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,  
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber  
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high ;  
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled  
The veil of life and death ? or do I lie  
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep  
Spread far around and inaccessibly  
Its circles ? For the very spirit fails,  
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep  
That vanishes among the viewless gales !  
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,  
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—  
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms  
Pile around it, ice and rock ; broad vales between  
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,  
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread  
And wind among the accumulated steeps ;  
A desert peopled by the storms alone,  
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,  
And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously  
Its shapes are heaped around ! rude, bare, and high,  
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene  
Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her young  
Ruin ? Were these their toys ? or did a sea  
Of fire envelope once this silent snow ?  
None can reply—all seems eternal now.  
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue  
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,  
So solemn, so serene, that man may be  
But for such faith with nature reconciled ;  
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe ; not understood

By all, but which the wise, and great, and good  
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

## IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,  
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell  
Within the dædal earth ; lightning, and rain,  
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,  
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams  
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep  
Holds every future leaf and flower ;—the bound  
With which from that detested trance they leap ;  
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,  
And that of him and all that his may be ;  
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound  
Are born and die ; revolve, subside and swell.  
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity  
Remote, serene, and inaccessible :  
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,  
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains  
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far  
fountains,  
Slow rolling on ; there, many a precipice,  
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power  
Have piled : dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,  
A city of death, distinct with many a tower  
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.  
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin  
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky  
Rolls its perpetual stream ; vast pines are strewing  
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil  
Branchless and shattered stand ; the rocks, drawn down  
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown  
The limits of the dead and living world,  
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place  
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil ;

Their food and their retreat for ever gone,  
So much of life and joy is lost. The race  
Of man, flies far in dread ; his work and dwelling  
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,  
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves  
Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,  
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling  
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,  
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever  
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,  
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

## v

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high :—the power is there,  
The still and solemn power of many sights,  
And many sounds, and much of life and death.  
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,  
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend  
Upon that Mountain ; none beholds them there,  
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,  
Or the star-beams dart through them :—Winds contend  
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath  
Rapid and strong, but silently ! Its home  
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes  
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods  
Over the snow. The secret strength of things  
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome  
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee !  
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,  
If to the human mind's imaginings  
Silence and solitude were vacancy ?

*July 23, 1816.*

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN ON THE FALL  
OF BONAPARTE

I HATED thee, fallen tyrant ! I did groan  
To think that a most unambitious slave,  
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave  
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne  
Where it had stood even now : thou didst prefer  
A frail and bloody pomp which time has swept  
In fragments towards oblivion. Massacre,  
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept,  
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,  
And stifled thee, their minister. I know  
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,  
That virtue owns a more eternal foe  
Than force or fraud : old Custom, legal Crime,  
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of time.

LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN  
HILLS

OCTOBER, 1818

MANY a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of misery,  
Or the mariner, worn and wan,  
Never thus could voyage on  
Day and night, and night and day,  
Drifting on his dreary way,  
With the solid darkness black  
Closing round his vessel's track ;  
Whilst above the sunless sky,  
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,  
And behind the tempest fleet



Hurries on with lightning feet,  
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,  
Till the ship has almost drank  
Death from the o'er-brimming deep ;  
And sinks down, down, like that sleep  
When the dreamer seems to be  
Weltering through eternity ;  
And the dim low line before  
Of a dark and distant shore  
Still recedes, as ever still  
Longing with divided will,  
But no power to seek or shun,  
He is ever drifted on  
O'er the unreposing wave  
To the haven of the grave.  
What if there no friends will greet ;  
What if there no heart will meet  
His with love's impatient beat ;  
Wander wheresoe'er he may,  
Can he dream before that day  
To find refuge from distress  
In friendship's smile, in love's caress ?  
Then 'twill wreak him little woe  
Whether such there be or no :  
Senseless is the breast, and cold,  
Which relenting love would fold ;  
Bloodless are the veins and chill  
Which the pulse of pain did fill ;  
Every little living nerve  
That from bitter words did swerve  
Round the tortured lips and brow,  
Are like sapless leaflets now  
Frozen upon December's bough.  
On the beach of a northern sea  
Which tempests shake eternally,  
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,  
Lies a solitary heap,  
One white skull and seven dry bones,

On the margin of the stones,  
Where a few grey rushes stand,  
Boundaries of the sea and land :  
Nor is heard one voice of wail  
But the sea-mews', as they sail  
O'er the billows of the gale ;  
Or the whirlwind up and down  
Howling, like a slaughtered town,  
When a king in glory rides  
Through the pomp of fratricides :  
Those unburied bones around  
There is many a mournful sound ;  
There is no lament for him,  
Like a sunless vapour, dim,  
Who once clothed with life and thought  
What now moves nor murmurs not.

\* Aye, many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide Agony :  
To such a one this morn was led,  
My bark by soft winds piloted :  
'Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the pæan,  
With which the legioned rooks did hail  
The sun's uprise majestic ;  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,  
Flecked with fire and azure, lie  
In the unfathomable sky,  
So their plumes of purple grain,  
Starred with drops of golden rain,  
Gleam above the sunlight woods,  
As in silent multitudes  
On the morning's fitful gale  
Through the broken mist they sail,  
And the vapours cloven and gleaming

Follow down the dark steep streaming,  
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,  
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea  
The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
Bounded by the vaporous air,  
Islanded by cities fair ;  
Underneath day's azure eyes,  
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,  
A peopled labyrinth of walls,  
Amphitrite's destined halls,  
Which her hoary sire now paves  
With his blue and beaming waves.  
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind,  
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined  
On the level quivering line  
Of the waters crystalline ;  
And before that chasm of light,  
As within a furnace bright,  
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,  
Shine like obelisks of fire,  
Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean  
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;  
As the flames of sacrifice  
From the marble shrines did rise,  
As to pierce the dome of gold  
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been  
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;  
Now is come a darker day,  
And thou soon must be his prey,  
If the power that raised thee here  
Hallow so thy watery bier.  
A less drear ruin than than now,  
With thy conquest-branded brow

Stooping to the slave of slaves  
From thy throne, among the waves  
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew  
Flies, as once before it flew,  
O'er thine isles depopulate,  
And all is in its ancient state,  
Save where many a palace gate  
With green sea-flowers overgrown  
Like a rock of ocean's own,  
Topples o'er the abandoned sea  
As the tides change sullenly.  
The fisher on his watery way,  
Wandering at the close of day,  
Will spread his sail and seize his oar  
Till he pass the gloomy shore,  
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep  
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,  
Lead a rapid mask of death  
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold  
Quivering through ærial gold,  
As I now behold them here,  
Would imagine not they were  
Sepulchres, where human forms,  
Like pollution-nourished worms  
To the corpse of greatness cling,  
Murdered, and now mouldering :  
But if Freedom should awake  
In her omnipotence, and shake  
From the Celtic Anarch's hold  
All the keys of dungeons cold,  
Where a hundred cities lie  
Chained like thee, ingloriously,  
Thou and all thy sister band  
Might adorn this sunny land,  
Twining memories of old time  
With new virtues more sublime ;

If not, perish thou and they,  
Clouds which stain truth's rising day  
By her sun consumed away,  
Earth can spare ye : while like flowers,  
In the waste of years and hours,  
From your dust new nations spring  
With more kindly blossoming.  
Perish—let there only be  
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea  
As the garment of thy sky  
Clothes the world immortally,  
One remembrance, more sublime  
Than the tattered pall of time,  
Which scarce hides thy visage wan ;—  
That a tempest-cleaving Swan  
Of the songs of Albion,  
Driven from his ancestral streams  
By the might of evil dreams,  
Found a nest in thee ; and Ocean  
Welcomed him with such emotion  
That its joy grew his, and sprung  
From his lips like music flung  
O'er a mighty thunder-fit  
Chastening terror :—what though yet  
Poesy's unfailing River,  
Which through Albion winds for ever  
Lashing with melodious wave  
Many a sacred Poet's grave,  
Mourn its latest nursling fled ?  
What though thou with all thy dead  
Scarce can for this fame repay  
Aught thine own ? oh, rather say  
Though thy sins and slaveries foul  
Overcloud a sunlike soul ?  
As the ghost of Homer clings  
Round Scamander's wasting springs ;  
As divinest Shakespeare's might  
Fills Avon and the world with light

Like omniscient power which he  
Imaged 'mid mortality ;  
As the love from Petrarch's urn,  
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,  
A quenchless lamp by which the heart  
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,  
Mighty spirit—so shall be  
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky  
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,  
Till the universal light  
Seems to level plain and height ;  
From the sea a mist has spread,  
And the beams of morn lie dead  
On the towers of Venice now,  
Like its glory long ago.  
By the skirts of that grey cloud  
Many-domèd Padua proud  
Stands, a peopled solitude,  
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,  
Where the peasant heaps his grain  
In the garner of his foe,  
And the milk-white oxen slow  
With the purple vintage strain,  
Heaped upon the creaking wain,  
That the brutal Celt may swill  
Drunken sleep with savage will ;  
And the sickle to the sword  
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,  
Like a weed whose shade is poison,  
Overgrows this region's foison,  
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come  
To destruction's harvest home :  
Men must reap the things they sow,  
Force from force must ever flow,  
Or worse ; but 'tis a bitter woe

That love or reason cannot change  
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls  
Those mute guests at festivals,  
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,  
Played at dice for Ezzelin,  
Till Death cried, " I win, I win ! "  
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,  
But Death promised, to assuage her,  
That he would petition for  
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,  
When the destined years were o'er  
Over all between the Po  
And the eastern Alpine snow,  
Under the mighty Austrian.  
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,  
And since that time, aye, long before,  
Both have ruled from shore to shore,  
That incestuous pair, who follow  
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,  
As Repentance follows Crime,  
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,  
Padua, now no more is burning ;  
Like a meteor, whose wild way  
Is lost over the grave of day,  
It gleams betrayed and to betray :  
Once remotest nations came  
To adore that sacred flame,  
When it lit not many a hearth  
On this cold and gloomy earth :  
Now new fires from antique light  
Spring beneath the wide world's might ;  
But their spark lies dead in thee,  
Trampled out by tyranny.  
As the Norway woodman quells,

In the depth of piny dells,  
One light flame among the brakes,  
While the boundless forest shakes,  
And its mighty trunks are torn  
By the fire thus lowly born :  
The spark beneath his feet is dead,  
He starts to see the flames it fed  
Howling through the darkened sky  
With a myriad tongues victoriously,  
And sinks down in fear : so thou,  
O Tyranny, beholdest now  
Light around thee, and thou hearest  
The loud flames ascend, and fearest :  
Grovel on the earth : aye, hide  
In the dust thy purple pride !

Noon descends around me now :  
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,  
When a soft and purple mist  
Like a vaporous amethyst,  
Or an air-dissolvèd star  
Mingling light and fragrance, far  
From the curved horizon's bound  
To the point of heaven's profound,  
Fills the overflowing sky ;  
And the plains that silent lie  
Underneath, the leaves unsodden  
Where the infant frost has trodden  
With his morning-wingèd feet,  
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;  
And the red and golden vines,  
Piercing with their trellised lines  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;  
The dun and bladed grass no less,  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air ; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet ; the line  
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine



In the south dimly islanded ;  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun ;  
And of living things each one ;  
And my spirit which so long  
Darkened this swift stream of song,  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky :  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,  
Or the mind which feeds this verse  
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon  
Autumn's evening meets me soon,  
Leading the infantine moon,  
And that one star, which to her  
Almost seems to minister  
Half the crimson light she brings  
From the sunset's radiant springs :  
And the soft dreams of the morn,  
(Which like winged winds had borne  
To that silent isle, which lies  
'Mid remembered agonies,  
The frail bark of this lone being,)  
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,  
And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be  
In the sea of life and agony :  
Other spirits float and flee  
O'er that gulph : even now, perhaps,  
On some rock the wild wave wraps,  
With folded wings they waiting sit  
For my bark, to pilot it  
To some calm and blooming cove,

Where for me, and those I love,  
May a windless bower be built,  
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,  
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,  
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,  
And soft sunshine, and the sound  
Of old forests echoing round,  
And the light and smell divine  
Of all flowers that breathe and shine :  
We may live so happy there,  
That the spirits of the air,  
Envyng us, may even entice  
To our healing paradise  
The polluting multitude ;  
But their rage would be subdued  
By that clime divine and calm,  
And the winds whose wings rain balm  
On the uplifted soul, and leaves  
Under which the bright sea heaves ;  
While each breathless interval  
In their whisperings musical  
The inspired soul supplies  
With its own deep melodies,  
And the love which heals all strife  
Circling, like the breath of life,  
All things in that sweet abode  
With its own mild brotherhood :  
They, not it, would change ; and soon  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain,  
And the earth grow young again.

## HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

## I

~~THE awful shadow of some unseen Power~~  
~~Floats though unseen amongst us,—visiting~~  
This various world with as inconstant wing  
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—  
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain  
shower,  
It visits with inconstant glance  
Each human heart and countenance ;  
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—  
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—  
Like memory of music fled,—  
Like aught that for its grace may be  
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

## 2

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate  
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon  
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone ?  
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,  
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate ?  
Ask why the sunlight not for ever  
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,  
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,  
Why fear and dream and death and birth  
Cast on the daylight of this earth  
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope  
For love and hate, despondency and hope ?

## 3

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever  
To sage or poet these responses given—

Therefore the names of Dæmon, Ghost, and Heaven,  
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,  
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to  
sever,

From all we hear and all we see,  
Doubt, chance, and mutability.

Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,  
Or music by the night wind sent,  
Through strings of some still instrument,  
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,  
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

## 4

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart  
And come, for some uncertain moments lent,  
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,  
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,  
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart  
Thou messenger of sympathies,  
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—  
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,  
Like darkness to a dying flame!  
Depart not as thy shadow came,  
Depart not—lest the grave should be,  
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

## 5

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped  
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,  
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing  
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead,  
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,  
I was not heard—I saw them not—  
When musing deeply on the lot  
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing  
All vital things that wake to bring

News of birds and blossoming,—  
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me ;  
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy !

## 6

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers  
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow ?  
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now  
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours  
Each from his voiceless grave : they have in visioned  
    bowers  
Of studious zeal or love's delight  
Outwatched with me the envious night—  
They know that never joy illumed my brow  
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free  
This world from its dark slavery,  
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,  
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

## 7

The day becomes more solemn and serene  
When noon is past—there is a harmony  
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,  
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,  
As if it could not be, as if it had not been !  
Thus let thy power, which like the truth  
Of nature on my passive youth  
Descended, to my onward life supply  
Its calm—to one who worships thee,  
And every form containing thee,  
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind  
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND<sup>1</sup>

## I

O, WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O, thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill :

Wild Spirit, which art moving every where ;  
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, O, hear !

## II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

<sup>1</sup> This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.

Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height  
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : O, hear !

## III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baïæ's bay,  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves : O, hear !

## IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O, uncontrollable ! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision ; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need,  
Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !  
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

## v

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :  
What if my leaves are falling like its own !  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,  
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !  
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?



## ODE TO LIBERTY

Yet, Freedom, yet thy banner torn but flying,  
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.

BYRON.

## I

A GLORIOUS people vibrated again  
The lightning of the nations : Liberty  
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,  
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,  
Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,  
And, in the rapid plumes of song,  
Clothed itself, sublime and strong ;  
As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,  
Hovering in verse o'er its accustomed prey ;  
Till from its station in the heaven of fame  
The Spirit's whirlwind rapt it, and the ray  
Of the remotest sphere of living flame  
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,  
As foam from a ship's swiftess, when there came  
A voice out of the deep : I will record the same.

## II

The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth :  
The burning stars of the abyss were hurled  
Into the depths of heaven. The Dædal earth,  
That island in the ocean of the world,  
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air :  
But this divinest universe  
Was yet a chaos and a curse,  
For thou wert not : but power from worst producing  
worse,  
The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,  
And of the birds, and of the watery forms,  
And there was war among them, and despair

Within them, raging without truce or terms :  
The bosom of their violated nurse  
Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on  
worms,  
And men on men ; each heart was as a hell of storms.

## III

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied  
His generations under the pavilion  
Of the Sun's throne : palace and pyramid,  
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million,  
Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.  
This human living multitude  
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,  
For thou wert not ; but o'er the populous solitude,  
Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves  
Hung Tyranny ; beneath, sate deified  
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves ;  
Into the shadow of her pinions wide  
Anarchs and priests who feed on gold and blood,  
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,  
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

## IV

The nodding promontories, and blue isles,  
And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves  
Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles  
Of favouring heaven ; from their enchanted caves  
Prophetic echoes flung dim melody.  
On the unapprehensive wild  
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,  
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled ;  
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,  
Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,  
Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,  
Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein

Of Parian stone ; and, yet a speechless child,  
Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain  
Her lidless eyes for thee ; when o'er the Ægean main "

## V

Athens arose : a city such as vision  
Builds from the purple crags and silver towers  
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision  
Of kingliest masonry : the ocean-floors  
Pave it ; the evening sky pavilions it ;  
Its portals are inhabited  
By thunder-zonèd winds, each head  
Within its cloudy wings with sunfire garlanded,  
A divine work ! Athens diviner yet  
Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will  
Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set ;  
For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill  
Peopled with forms that mock the eternal dead  
In marble immortality, that hill  
Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

## VI

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river  
Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay  
Immovably unquiet, and for ever  
It trembles, but it cannot pass away !  
The voices of thy bards and sages thunder  
With an earth-awakening blast  
Through the caverns of the past ;  
Religion veils her eyes ; Oppression shrinks aghast :  
A wingèd sound of joy, and love, and wonder,  
Which soars where Expectation never flew,  
Rending the veil of space and time asunder !  
One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew ;  
One sun illumines heaven ; one spirit vast  
With life and love makes chaos ever new,  
As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

## VII

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,  
Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmæan Mænad,  
She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest  
From that Elysian food was yet unweanèd ;  
And many a deed of terrible uprightness  
By thy sweet love was sanctified ;  
And in thy smile, and by thy side,  
Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.  
But when tears stained thy robe of vestal whiteness,  
And gold profaned thy capitolian throne,  
Thou didst desert, with spirit-wingèd lightness,  
The senate of the tyrants : they sunk prone  
Slaves of one tyrant : Palatinus sighed  
Faint echoes of Ionian song ; that tone  
Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown.

## VIII

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,  
Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,  
Or utmost islet inaccessible,  
Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,  
Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,  
And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,  
To talk in echoes sad and stern,  
Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn ?  
For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks  
Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.  
What if the tears rained through thy shattered locks  
Were quickly dried ? for thou didst groan, not weep,  
When from its sea of death to kill and burn,  
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,  
And made thy world an undistinguishable heap.

## IX

A thousand years the Earth cried, Where art thou ?  
And then the shadow of thy coming fell

On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow :  
And many a warrior-peopled citadel,  
Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,  
Arose in sacred Italy,  
Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea  
Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crowned  
majesty ;  
That multitudinous anarchy did sweep,  
And burst around their walls, like idle foam,  
Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep  
Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb  
Dissonant arms ; and Art, which cannot die,  
With divine wand traced on our earthly home  
Fit imagery to pave heaven's everlasting dome.

## X

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon ! thou terror  
Of the world's wolves ! thou bearer of the quiver,  
Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-wingèd Error,  
As light may pierce the clouds when they dis sever  
In the calm regions of the orient day !  
Luther caught thy wakening glance ;  
Like lightning, from his leaden lance  
Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance  
In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay ;  
And England's prophets hailed thee as their queen,  
In songs whose music cannot pass away,  
Though it must flow for ever ; not unseen  
Before the spirit-sighted countenance  
Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene  
Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

## XI

The eager hours and unreluctant years  
As on a dawn-illumined mountain stood,  
Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,  
Darkening each other with their multitude,

And cried aloud, Liberty ! Indignation  
    Answered Pity from her cave ;  
    Death grew pale within the grave,  
And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save !  
    When like heaven's sun girt by the exhalation  
    Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise,  
    Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation  
    Like shadows : as if day had cloven the skies  
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,  
    Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,  
    Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

## XII

Thou heaven of earth ! what spells could pall thee then,  
    In ominous eclipse ? a thousand years  
Bred from the slime of deep oppression's den  
    Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears,  
Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away ;  
    How like Bacchanals of blood  
    Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood  
Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood !  
    When one, like them, but mightier far than they,  
    The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers  
    Rose : armies mingled in obscure array,  
    Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers  
Of serene heaven. He, by the past pursued,  
    Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,  
    Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral  
    towers.

## XIII

England yet sleeps : was she not called of old ?  
    Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder  
Vesuvius wakens Ætna, and the cold  
    Snow-crag by its reply are cloven in sunder :  
O'er the lit waves every Æolian isle  
    From Pithecusa to Pelorus  
    Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus :

They cry, Be dim ; ye lamps of heaven suspended o'er us.  
Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile  
And they dissolve ; but Spain's were links of steel,  
Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest file.  
Twins of a single destiny ! appeal  
To the eternal years enthroned before us,  
In the dim West ; impress us from a seal,  
All ye have thought and done ! Time cannot dare  
conceal.

## XIV

Tomb of Arminius ! render up thy dead,  
Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,  
His soul may stream over the tyrant's head ;  
Thy victory shall be his epitaph,  
Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine,  
King-deluded Germany,  
His dead spirit lives in thee.  
Why do we fear or hope ? thou art already free !  
And thou, lost Paradise of this divine  
And glorious world ! thou flowery wilderness !  
Thou island of eternity ! thou shrine  
Where desolation clothed with loveliness,  
Worships the thing thou wert ! O Italy,  
Gather thy blood into thy heart ; repress  
The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces.

## XV

O, that the free would stamp the impious name  
Of KING into the dust ! or write it there,  
So that this blot upon the page of fame  
Were as a serpent's path, which the light air  
Erases, and the flat sands close behind !  
Ye the oracle have heard :  
Lift the victory-flashing sword,  
And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,  
Which weak itself as stubble, yet can bind  
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,

The axes and the rods which awe mankind ;  
The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm  
Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred ;  
Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,  
To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

## XVI

O, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle  
Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,  
That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle  
Into the hell from which it first was hurled,  
A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure ;  
Till human thoughts might kneel alone  
Each before the judgment-throne  
Of its own aweless soul, or of the power unknown !  
O, that the words which make the thoughts obscure  
From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering dew  
From a white lake blot heaven's blue portraiture,  
Were stripped of their thin masks and various hue  
And frowns and smiles and splendours not their own,  
Till in the nakedness of false and true  
They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due.

## XVII

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever  
Can be between the cradle and the grave  
Crowned him the King of Life. O vain endeavour !  
If on his own high will, a willing slave,  
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.  
What if earth can clothe and feed  
Amplest millions at their need,  
And power in thought be as the tree within the seed ?  
O, what if Art, an ardent intercessor,  
Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,  
Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,  
And cries : Give me, thy child, dominion



Over all height and depth ? if Life can breed  
New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan,  
Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousand fold for one.

## XVIII

Come Thou, but lead out of the inmost cave  
Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star  
Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,  
Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car  
Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame ;  
Comes she not, and come ye not,  
Rulers of eternal thought,  
To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportioned lot ?  
Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame  
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be ?  
O, Liberty ! if such could be thy name  
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee :  
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought  
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free  
Wept tears, and blood like tears ? The solemn  
harmony

## XIX

Paused, and the spirit of that mighty singing  
To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn ;  
Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging  
Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,  
Sinks headlong through the aërial golden light  
On the heavy sounding plain,  
When the bolt has pierced its brain ;  
As summer clouds dissolve, unburthened of their rain ;  
As a far taper fades with fading night,  
As a brief insect dies with dying day,  
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,  
Drooped ; o'er it closed the echoes far away  
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,  
As waves which lately paved his watery way  
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

## TO A SKYLARK

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit !  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire ;  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
Thou dost float and run ;  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear,  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is over-  
flowed.

What thou art we know not  
What is most like thee ?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not—

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower—

Like a glow-worm golden  
In a dell of dew,  
Scattering unbeholden  
Its ærial hue  
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the  
view—

Like a rose embowered  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflowered,  
Till the scent it gives  
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged  
thieves.

Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awakened flowers,  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine ;  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine :

Chorus Hymenæal,  
Or triumphal chaunt,  
Matched with thine, would be all  
But an empty vaunt,  
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain ?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?  
What shapes of sky or plain ?  
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of  
pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be—  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee :  
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety

Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after  
And pine for what is not :  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught ;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest  
thought.

Yet if we could scorn  
Hate, and pride, and fear ;  
If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,  
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound—  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found—  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

## THE CLOUD

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers  
From the seas and the streams ;  
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid  
In their noonday dreams.  
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken  
The sweet buds every one,  
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,  
As she dances about the sun.  
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,  
And whiten the green plains under,  
And then again I dissolve it in rain,  
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,  
And their great pines groan aghast ;

And all the night 'tis my pillow white,  
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.  
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,  
Lightning my pilot sits ;  
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,—  
It struggles and howls at fits ;  
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,  
This pilot is guiding me,  
Lured by the love of the genii that move  
In the depths of the purple sea ;  
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,  
Over the lakes and the plains,  
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,  
The Spirit he loves remains ;  
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,  
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,  
And his burning plumes outspread,  
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,  
When the morning star shines dead,  
As on the jag of a mountain crag,  
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,  
An eagle alit one moment may sit  
In the light of its golden wings.  
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath  
Its ardours of rest and of love,  
And the crimson pall of eve may fall  
From the depth of heaven above,  
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,  
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,  
Whom mortals call the moon,  
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,  
By the midnight breezes strewn ;  
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,  
Which only the angels hear,

May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,  
The stars peep behind her and peer ;  
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,  
Like a swarm of golden bees,  
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,  
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,  
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,  
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,  
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl ;  
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,  
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.  
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,  
Over a torrent sea,  
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,  
The mountains its columns be.  
The triumphal arch through which I march  
With hurricane, fire, and snow,  
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,  
Is the million-coloured bow ;  
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,  
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,  
And the nursling of the sky ;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain when, with never a stain,  
The pavilion of heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
Build up the blue dome of air,  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

## THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE AT  
MANCHESTER

1819

As I lay asleep in Italy  
There came a voice from over the Sea,  
And with great power it forth led me  
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

I met Murder on the way—  
He had a mask like Castlereagh—  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim ;  
Seven bloodhounds followed him :

All were fat ; and well they might  
Be in admirable plight,  
For one by one, and two by two,  
He tossed them human hearts to chew  
Which from his wide cloke he drew.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,  
Like Eldon, an ermined gown ;  
His big tears, for he wept well,  
Turned to millstones as they fell.

And the little children, who  
Round his feet played to and fro,  
Thinking every tear a gem,  
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,  
And the shadows of the night,  
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy  
On a crocodile rode by.



And many more Destructions played  
In this ghastly masquerade,  
All disguised, even to the eyes,  
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers or spies.

Last came Anarchy : he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood ;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a kingly crown ;  
And in his grasp a sceptre shone ;  
On his brow this mark I saw—  
“ I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW ! ”

With a pace stately and fast,  
Over English land he passed.  
Trampling to a mire of blood  
The adoring multitude.

And a mighty troop around  
With their trampling shook the ground,  
Waving each a bloody sword  
For the service of their Lord.

And with glorious triumph they  
Rode through England proud and gay,  
Drunk as with intoxication  
Of the wine of desolation.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,  
Passed that Pageant swift and free,  
Tearing up, and trampling down,  
Till they came to London town.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,  
Felt his heart with terror sicken,  
Hearing the tempestuous cry  
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

For with pomp to meet him came,  
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,  
The hired murderers, who did sing  
"Thou art God, and Law, and King.

"We have waited, weak and lone,  
For thy coming, Mighty One !  
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,  
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,  
To the earth their pale brows bowed ;  
Like a bad prayer not over loud,  
Whispering—"Thou art Law and God."—

Then all cried with one accord,  
"Thou art King, and God, and Lord ;  
Anarchy, to thee we bow,  
Be thy name made holy now !"

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,  
Bowed and grinned to every one,  
As well as if his education  
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

For he knew the Palaces  
Of our Kings were rightly his ;  
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,  
And the gold-inwoven robe.

So he sent his slaves before  
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,  
And was proceeding with intent  
To meet his pensioned Parliament,

When one fled past, a maniac maid,  
And her name was Hope, she said :  
But she looked more like Despair,  
And she cried out in the air :

“ My father Time is weak and grey  
With waiting for a better day ;  
See how idiot-like he stands,  
Fumbling with his palsied hands !

“ He has had child after child,  
And the dust of death is piled  
Over every one but me—  
Misery, oh, Misery ! ”

Then she lay down in the street,  
Right before the horses' feet,  
Expecting, with a patient eye,  
Murder, Fraud and Anarchy.

When between her and her foes  
A mist, a light, an image rose,  
Small at first, and weak, and frail  
Like the vapour of a vale :

Till as clouds grow on the blast,  
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,  
And glare with lightnings as they fly,  
And speak in thunder to the sky,

It grew—a Shape arrayed in mail  
Brighter than the viper's scale,  
And upborne on wings whose grain  
Was as the light of sunny rain.

On its helm, seen far away,  
A planet, like the Morning's, lay ;  
And those plumes its light rained through  
Like a shower of crimson dew.

With step as soft as wind it passed  
O'er the heads of men—so fast  
That they knew the presence there,  
And looked,—but all was empty air.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,  
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,  
As waves arise when loud winds call,  
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

And the prostrate multitude  
Looked—and ankle-deep in blood,  
Hope, that maiden most serene,  
Was walking with a quiet mien :

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,  
Lay dead earth upon the earth ;  
The Horse of Death tameless as wind  
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind  
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,  
A sense awakening and yet tender,  
Was heard and felt—and at its close  
These words of joy and fear arose,

As if their own indignant Earth  
Which gave the sons of England birth  
Had felt their blood upon her brow,  
And, shuddering with a mother's throe,

Had turnèd every drop of blood  
By which her face had been bedewed  
To an accent unwithstood,—  
As if her heart had cried aloud :

“ Men of England, heirs of Glory,  
Heroes of unwritten story,  
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,  
Hopes of her, and one another ;

“ Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many—they are few.

“ What is Freedom ?—ye can tell  
That which slavery is, too well—  
For its very name has grown  
To an echo of your own.

“ ’Tis to work and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day  
In your limbs, as in a cell  
For the tyrants’ use to dwell :

“ So that ye for them are made  
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,  
With or without your own will bent  
To their defence and nourishment.

“ ’Tis to see your children weak  
With their mothers pine and peak,  
When the winter winds are bleak,—  
They are dying whilst I speak.

“ ’Tis to hunger for such diet  
As the rich man in his riot  
Casts to the fat dogs that lie  
Surfeiting beneath his eye ;

“ ’Tis to let the Ghost of Gold  
Take from Toil a thousandfold  
More than e’er its substance could  
In the tyrannies of old.

Paper coin—that forgery  
Of the title-deeds which ye  
Hold to something of the worth  
Of the inheritance of Earth.

“ ’Tis to be a slave in soul  
And to hold no strong control  
Over your own will, but be  
All that others make of ye.

“ And at length when ye complain  
With a murmur weak and vain,  
’Tis to see the Tyrant’s crew  
Ride over your wives and you—  
Blood is on the grass like dew.

“ Then it is to feel revenge  
Fiercely thirsting to exchange  
Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong—  
Do not thus when ye are strong.

“ Birds find rest in narrow nest  
When weary of their wingèd quest ;  
Beasts find fare in woody lair  
When storm and snow are in the air.

“ Asses, swine, have litter spread  
And with fitting food are fed ;  
All things have a home but one—  
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none !

“ This is Slavery—savage men,  
Or wild beasts within a den  
Would endure not as ye do—  
But such ills they never knew.

“ What art thou, Freedom ? O ! could slaves  
Answer from their living graves  
This demand—tyrants would flee  
Like a dream’s dim imagery :

“ Thou art not, as impostors say,  
A shadow soon to pass away,  
A superstition, and a name  
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

“ For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come,  
In a neat and happy home.

“ Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled multitude—  
No—in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be  
As in England now we see.

“ To the rich thou art a check,  
When his foot is on the neck  
Of his victim, thou dost make  
That he treads upon a snake.

“ Thou art Justice—ne’er for gold  
May thy righteous laws be sold  
As laws are in England—thou  
Shield’st alike the high and low.

“ Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never  
Dream that God will damn for ever  
All who think those things untrue  
Of which Priests make such ado.

"Thou art Peace—never by thee  
Would blood and treasure wasted be  
As tyrants wasted them, when all  
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

"What if English toil and blood  
Was poured forth, even as a flood?  
It availed, Oh, Liberty!  
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

"Thou art Love—the rich have kissed  
Thy feet, and like him following Christ  
Give their substance to the free  
And through the rough world follow thee,

"Or turn their wealth to arms, and make  
War for thy belovèd sake  
On wealth, and war, and fraud—whence they  
Drew the power which is their prey.

"Science, Poetry and Thought  
Are thy lamps; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
So serene, they curse it not.

"Spirit, Patience, Gentleness.  
All that can adorn and bless  
Art thou—let deeds, not words, express  
Thine exceeding loveliness.

"Let a great Assembly be  
Of the fearless and the free  
On some spot of English ground  
Where the plains stretch wide around.

"Let the blue sky overhead,  
The green earth on which ye tread,  
All that must eternal be,  
Witness the solemnity.



“ From the corners uttermost  
Of the bounds of English coast ;  
From every hut, village and town  
Where those who live and suffer moan  
For others’ misery or their own,

“ From the workhouse and the prison  
Where, pale as corpses newly risen,  
Women, children, young and old  
Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

“ From the haunts of daily life  
Where is waged the daily strife  
With common wants and common cares  
Which sows the human heart with tares—

“ Lastly from the palaces  
Where the murmur of distress  
Echoes, like the distant sound  
Of a wind alive around

“ Those prison halls of wealth and fashion  
Where some few feel such compassion  
For those who groan, and toil, and wail  
As must make their brethren pale—

“ Ye who suffer woes untold,  
Or to feel, or to behold  
Your lost country bought and sold  
With a price of blood and gold—

“ Let a vast assembly be,  
And with great solemnity  
Declare with measured words that ye  
Are, as God has made ye, free—

“ Be your strong and simple words  
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,  
And wide as targes let them be,  
With their shade to cover ye.

“ Let the tyrants pour around  
With a quick and startling sound,  
Like the loosening of a sea,  
Troops of armed emblazonry.

“ Let the charged artillery drive  
Till the dead air seems alive  
With the clash of clanging wheels,  
And the tramp of horses’ heels.

“ Let the fixèd bayonet  
Gleam with sharp desire to wet  
Its bright point in English blood  
Looking keen as one for food.

“ Let the horsemen’s scymitars  
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars  
Thirsting to eclipse their burning  
In a sea of death and mourning.

“ Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war ;

“ And let Panic, who outspeeds  
The career of armèd steeds,  
Pass, a disregarded shade,  
Through your phalanx undismayed.

“ Let the laws of your own land,  
Good or ill, between ye stand  
Hand to hand, and foot to foot.  
Arbiters of the dispute,

“ The old laws of England—they  
Whose reverend heads with age are grey,  
Children of a wiser day ;  
And whose solemn voice must be  
Thine own echo—Liberty !

“ On those who first should violate  
Such sacred heralds in their state  
Rest the blood that must ensue . . .  
And it will not rest on you.

“ And if then the tyrants dare,  
Let them ride among you there,  
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,—  
What they like, that let them do.

“ With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear, and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay  
Till their rage has died away.

“ Then they will return with shame  
To the place from which they came,  
And the blood thus shed will speak  
In hot blushes on their cheek.

“ Every woman in the land  
Will point at them as they stand—  
They will hardly dare to greet  
Their acquaintance in the street.

“ And the bold, true warriors  
Who have hugged Danger in wars  
Will turn to those who would be free  
Ashamed of such base company.

“ And that slaughter to the Nation  
Shall steam up like inspiration,  
Eloquent, oracular ;  
A volcano heard afar.

“ And these words shall then become  
Like oppression’s thundered doom  
Ringing through each heart and brain,  
Heard again—again—again—

“ Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number—  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many—they are few.”

## LINES

### I

THE cold earth slept below,  
Above the cold sky shone ;  
And all around, with a chilling sound,  
From caves of ice and fields of snow,  
The breath of night like death did flow  
Beneath the sinking moon.

### II

The wintry hedge was black,  
The green grass was not seen,  
The birds did rest on the bare thorn’s breast,  
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,  
Had bound their folds o’er many a crack,  
Which the frost had made between.

## III

Thine eyes glowed in the glare  
Of the moon's dying light ;  
As a fenfire's beam on a sluggish stream  
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone there,  
And it yellowed the strings of thy raven hair,  
That shook in the wind of night.

## IV

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved—  
The wind made thy bosom chill—  
The night did shed on thy dear head  
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie  
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky  
Might visit thee at will.

## A WIDOW BIRD

A widow bird sate mourning for her love  
Upon a wintry bough ;  
The frozen wind crept on above,  
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,  
No flower upon the ground,  
And little motion in the air  
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

## SONG

## I

RARELY, rarely, comest thou,  
Spirit of Delight !  
Wherefore hast thou left me now  
Many a day and night ?  
Many a weary night and day  
'Tis since thou art fled away.

## II

How shall ever one like me  
Win thee back again ?  
With the joyous and the free  
Thou wilt scoff at pain.  
Spirit false ! thou hast forgot  
All but those who need thee not.

## III

As a lizard with the shade  
Of a trembling leaf,  
Thou with sorrow art dismayed ;  
Even the sighs of grief  
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,  
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

## IV

Let me set my mournful ditty  
To a merry measure,  
Thou wilt never come for pity,  
Thou wilt come for pleasure.  
Pity then will cut away  
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

## V

I love all that thou lovest,  
Spirit of Delight !  
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,  
And the starry night ;  
Autumn evening, and the morn  
When the golden mists are born.

## VI

I love snow, and all the forms  
Of the radiant frost ;  
I love waves, and winds, and storms,  
Every thing almost  
Which is Nature's, and may be  
Untainted by man's misery.

## VII

I love tranquil solitude,  
And such society  
As is quiet, wise and good ;  
Between thee and me  
What difference ? but thou dost possess  
The things I seek, not love them less.

## VIII

I love Love—though he has wings,  
And like light can flee,  
But above all other things,  
Spirit, I love thee—  
Thou art love and life ! O come,  
Make once more my heart thy home.

## THE FUGITIVES

## I

THE waters are flashing,  
The white hail is dashing,  
The lightnings are glancing,  
The hoar spray is dancing—  
Away !

The whirlwind is rolling,  
The thunder is tolling,  
The forest is swinging,  
The minster bells ringing—  
Come away !

The Earth is like Ocean,  
Wreck-strewn and in motion :  
Bird, beast, man and worm  
Have crept out of the storm—  
Come away !

## II

“ Our boat has one sail,  
And the helmsman is pale ;—  
A bold pilot I trow,  
Who should follow us now,”—  
Shouted He—

And she cried : “ Ply the oar !  
Put off gaily from shore ! ”—  
As she spoke, bolts of death  
Mixed with hail, specked their path  
O'er the sea.



And from isle, tower and rock,  
The blue beacon cloud broke,  
And though dumb in the blast,  
The red cannon flashed fast  
From the lee.

## III

“ And fear’st thou, and fear’st thou ?  
And seest thou, and hear’st thou ?  
And drive we not free  
O’er the terrible sea,  
I and thou ? ”

One boat-cloke did cover  
The loved and the lover—  
Their blood beats one measure,  
They murmur proud pleasure  
Soft and low ;—

While around the lashed Ocean,  
Like mountains in motion,  
Is withdrawn and uplifted,  
Sunk, shattered and shifted  
To and fro.

## IV

In the court of the fortress  
Beside the pale portress,  
Like a bloodhound well beaten,  
The bridegroom stands, eaten  
By shame ;

On the topmost watch-turret,  
As a death-boding spirit,  
Stands the grey tyrant father,—  
To his voice the mad weather  
Seems tame ;

And with curses as wild  
As e'er clung to child,  
He devotes to the blast  
The best, loveliest and last  
Of his name !

## REMEMBRANCE

## I

SWIFTER far than summer's flight—  
Swifter far than youth's delight—  
Swifter far than happy night,  
    Art thou come and gone—  
As the wood when leaves are shed,  
As the night when sleep is fled,  
As the heart when joy is dead,  
    I am left lone, alone.

## II

The swallow summer comes again—  
The owlet night resumes his reign—  
But the wild-swan youth is fain  
    To fly with thee, false as thou.  
My heart each day desires the morrow ;  
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow ;  
Vainly would my winter borrow  
    Sunny leaves from any bough.

## III

Lilies for a bridal bed—  
Roses for a matron's head—  
Violets for a maiden dead—  
    Pansies let *my* flowers be :  
On the living grave I bear  
Scatter them without a tear—  
Let no friend, however dear,  
    Waste one hope, one fear for me.

## A LAMENT

## I

Oh, world ! oh, life ! oh, time !  
On whose last steps I climb  
Trembling at that where I had stood before ;  
When will return the glory of your prime ?  
No more—O, never more !

## II

Out of the day and night  
A joy has taken flight ;  
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,  
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight  
No more—O, never more !

## TO JANE—THE INVITATION

BEST and brightest, come away !  
Fairer far than this fair Day,  
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,  
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow  
To the rough Year just awake  
In its cradle on the brake.  
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,  
Through the winter wandering,  
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn  
To hoar February born ;  
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,  
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,  
And smiled upon the silent sea,  
And bade the frozen streams be free,  
And waked to music all their fountains,

And breathed upon the frozen mountains,  
And like a prophetess of May  
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,  
Making the wintry world appear  
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,  
To the wild wood and the downs—  
To the silent wilderness  
Where the soul need not repress  
Its music lest it should not find  
An echo in another's mind,  
While the touch of Nature's art  
Harmonizes heart to heart.  
I leave this notice on my door  
For each accustomed visitor :—  
“ I am gone into the fields  
To take what this sweet hour yields ;—  
Reflexion, you may come to-morrow,  
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.—  
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,—  
You tiresome verse-reciter, Care,—  
I will pay you in the grave,—  
Death will listen to your stave.  
Expectation too, be off !  
To-day is for itself enough ;  
Hope, in pity mock not Woe  
With smiles, nor follow where I go ;  
Long having lived on thy sweet food,  
At length I find one moment's good  
After long pain—with all your love,  
This you never told me of.”

Radiant Sister of the Day,  
Awake ! arise ! and come away !  
To the wild woods and the plains,  
And the pools where winter rains  
Image all their roof of leaves,

Where the pine its garland weaves  
Of sapless green and ivy dun  
Round stems that never kiss the sun ;  
Where the lawns and pastures be,  
And the sand-hills of the sea ;—  
Where the melting hoar-frost wets  
The daisy-star that never sets,  
And wind-flowers, and violets,  
Which yet join not scent to hue,  
Crown the pale year weak and new ;  
When the night is left behind  
In the deep east, dun and blind,  
And the blue noon is over us,  
And the multitudinous  
Billows murmur at our feet,  
Where the earth and ocean meet,  
And all things seem only one  
In the universal sun.

## TO NIGHT .

## I

SWIFTLY walk o'er the western wave,  
    Spirit of Night !  
Out of the misty eastern cave,  
Where all the long and lone daylight,  
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,  
Which make thee terrible and dear,—  
    Swift be thy flight !

## II

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,  
    Star-inwrought !  
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;

Kiss her until she be wearied out,  
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,  
Touching all with thine opiate wand—  
Come, long sought !

## III

When I arose and saw the dawn,  
I sighed for thee ;  
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,  
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,  
And the weary Day turned to his rest,  
Lingering like an unloved guest,  
I sighed for thee.

## IV

Thy brother Death came, and cried,  
Wouldst thou me ?  
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,  
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,  
Shall I nestle near thy side ?  
Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,  
No, not thee !

## V

Death will come when thou art dead,  
Soon, too soon—  
Sleep will come when thou art fled ;  
Of neither would I ask the boon  
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—  
Swift be thine approaching flight,  
Come soon, soon !

## EVENING : PONTE A MARE, PISA

## I

THE sun is set ; the swallows are asleep ;  
The bats are flitting fast in the grey air ;  
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,  
And evening's breath, wandering here and there  
Over the quivering surface of the stream,  
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

## II

There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,  
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees ;  
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light ;  
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze  
The dust and straws are driven up and down,  
And whirled about the pavement of the town.

## III

Within the surface of the fleeting river  
The wrinkled image of the city lay,  
Immovably unquiet, and for ever  
It trembles, but it never fades away ;  
Go to the . . .  
You, being changed, will find it then as now.

## IV

The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut  
By darkest barriers of cinereous cloud,  
Like mountain over mountain huddled—but  
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,  
And over it a space of watery blue,  
Which the keen evening star is shining through.

## LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

## I

THE Fountains mingle with the River  
And the Rivers with the Ocean,  
The winds of Heaven mix for ever  
With a sweet emotion ;  
Nothing in the world is single ;  
All things by a law divine  
In one spirit meet and mingle.  
Why not I with thine ?—

## II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven  
And the waves clasp one another ;  
No sister-flower would be forgiven  
If it disdained its brother,  
And the sunlight clasps the earth  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea :  
What is all this sweet work worth  
If thou kiss not me ?

## TO

## I

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,  
Thou needest not fear mine ;  
My spirit is too deeply laden  
Ever to burthen thine.

## II

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,  
Thou needest not fear mine ;  
Innocent is the heart's devotion  
With which I worship thine.



## LINES

## I

WHEN the lamp is shattered  
The light in the dust lies dead—  
When the cloud is scattered  
The rainbow's glory is shed.  
When the lute is broken,  
Sweet tones are remembered not ;  
When the lips have spoken,  
Loved accents are soon forgot.

## II

As music and splendour  
Survive not the lamp and the lute,  
The heart's echoes render  
No song when the spirit is mute,—  
No song but sad dirges,  
Like the wind through a ruined cell,  
Or the mournful surges  
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

## III

When hearts have once mingled  
Love first leaves the well-built nest,—  
The weak one is singled  
To endure what it once possessed.  
O, Love ! who bewailest  
The frailty of all things here,  
Why choose you the frailest  
For your cradle, your home and your bier ?

## IV

Its passions will rock thee  
As the storms rock the ravens on high :  
Bright reason will mock thee,  
Like the sun from a wintry sky.  
From thy nest every rafter  
Will rot, and thine eagle home  
Leave thee naked to laughter,  
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

## MUTABILITY

## I

THE flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow dies ;  
All that we wish to stay  
Tempt and then flies.  
What is this world's delight ?  
Lightning that mocks the night,  
Brief even as bright.

## II

Virtue, how frail it is !  
Friendship how rare !  
Love, how it sells poor bliss  
For proud despair !  
But we, though soon they fall,  
Survive their joy, and all  
Which ours we call.

## III

Whilst skies are blue and bright,  
Whilst flowers are gay,  
Whilst eyes that change ere night  
Make glad the day ;  
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,  
Dream thou—and from thy sleep  
Then wake to weep.

TO ———

## I

ONE word is too often profaned  
For me to profane it,  
One feeling too falsely disdained  
For thee to disdain it.  
One hope is too like despair  
For prudence to smother,  
And pity from thee more dear  
Than that from another.

## II

I can give not what men call love,  
But wilt thou accept not  
The worship the heart lifts above  
And the Heavens reject not,—  
The desire of the moth for the star,  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow?

## DIRGE FOR THE YEAR

## I

ORPHAN hours, the year is dead,—  
Come and sigh, come and weep !  
Merry hours, smile instead,  
For the year is but asleep.  
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,  
Mocking your untimely weeping.

## II

As an earthquake rocks a corse  
In its coffin in the clay,  
So White Winter, that rough nurse,  
Rocks the death-cold year to-day ;  
Solemn hours ! wail aloud  
For your mother in her shroud.

## III

As the wild air stirs and sways  
The tree-swung cradle of a child,  
So the breath of these rude days  
Rocks the year :—be calm and mild,  
Trembling hours,—she will arise  
With new love within her eyes.

## IV

January grey is here,  
Like a sexton by her grave ;  
February bears the bier,  
March with grief doth howl and rave,  
And April weeps—but, O, ye hours,  
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

## AUTUMN

## A DIRGE

## I

THE warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,  
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,  
And the year  
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,  
Is lying.

Come, months, come away,  
From November to May,  
In your saddest array ;  
Follow the bier  
Of the dead cold year,  
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

## II

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,  
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling  
For the year ;  
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone  
To his dwelling ;  
Come, months, come away ;  
Put on white, black, and grey ;  
Let your light sisters play—  
Ye, follow the bier  
Of the dead cold year,  
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

## ARETHUSA

## I

ARETHUSA arose  
From her couch of snows  
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—  
From cloud and from crag,  
With many a jag,  
Shepherding her bright fountains.  
She leapt down the rocks,  
With her rainbow locks  
Streaming among the streams ;—  
Her steps paved with green  
The downward ravine  
Which slopes to the western gleams :

And gliding and springing  
She went, ever singing,  
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;  
The Earth seemed to love her,  
And Heaven smiled above her,  
As she lingered towards the deep.

## II

Then Alpheus bold,  
On his glacier cold,  
With his trident the mountains strook  
And opened a chasm  
In the rocks ;—with the spasm  
All Erymanthus shook  
And the black south wind  
It concealed behind  
The urns of the silent snow,  
And earthquake and thunder  
Did rend in sunder  
The bars of the springs below :  
The beard and the hair  
Of the River-god were  
Seen through the torrent's sweep,  
As he followed the light  
Of the fleet nymph's flight  
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

## III

“ Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !  
And bid the deep hide me,  
For he grasps me now by the hair ! ”  
The loud Ocean heard,  
To its blue depth stirred,  
And divided at her prayer ;  
And under the water  
The Earth's white daughter  
Fled like a sunny beam ;

Behind her descended  
Her billows, unblended  
With the brackish Dorian stream :—  
Like a gloomy stain  
On the emerald main  
Alpheus rushed behind,—  
As an eagle pursuing  
A dove to its ruin  
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

## IV

Under the bowers  
Where the Ocean Powers  
Sit on their pearlèd thrones,  
Through the coral woods  
Of the weltering floods,  
Over heaps of unvalued stones ;  
Through the dim beams  
Which amid the streams  
Weave a net-work of coloured light ;  
And under the caves,  
Where the shadowy waves  
Are as green as the forest's night :—  
Outspeeding the shark  
And the sword-fish dark,  
Under the ocean foam,  
And up through the rifts  
Of the mountain cliffs  
They passed to their Dorian home.

## V

And now from their fountains  
In Enna's mountains,  
Down one vale where the morning basks,  
Like friends once parted  
Grown single-hearted,  
They ply their watery tasks.

At sunrise they leap  
From their cradles steep  
In the cave of the shelving hill ;  
At noontide they flow  
Through the woods below  
And the meadows of Asphodel ;  
And at night they sleep  
In the rocking deep  
Beneath the Ortygian shore ;—  
Like spirits that lie  
In the azure sky  
When they love but live no more.

## THE QUESTION

### I

I DREAMED that, as I wandered by the way,  
Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,  
And gentle odours led my steps astray,  
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring  
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay  
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling  
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,  
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

### II

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,  
Daisies, those pearly Arcturi of the earth,  
The constellated flower that never sets ;  
Faint oxlips ; tender bluebells, at whose birth  
The sod scarce heaved ; and that tall flower that wets  
(Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth)  
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,  
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.



## III

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,  
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured May,  
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine  
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day ;  
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,  
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;  
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,  
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

## IV

And nearer to the river's trembling edge  
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with  
white,  
And starry river-buds among the sedge,  
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,  
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge  
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ;  
And bulrushes and reeds of such deep green  
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

## V

Methought that of these visionary flowers  
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way  
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers  
Were mingled or opposed, the like array  
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours  
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,  
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,  
That I might there present it !—oh ! to whom ?

## HYMN OF APOLLO

## I

THE sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,  
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries,

From the broad moonlight of the sky,

Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,—

Waken me when their Mother, the grey Dawn,

Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

## II

Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,

I walk over the mountains and the waves,

Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam ;

My footsteps pave the clouds with fire ; the caves

Are filled with my bright presence, and the air

Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.

## III

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill

Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day ;

All men who do or even imagine ill

Fly me, and from the glory of my ray

Good minds and open actions take new might,

Until diminished by the reign of night.

## IV

I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers

With their ætherial colours ; the Moon's globe

And the pure stars in their eternal bowers

Are cinctured with my power as with a robe ;

Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine,

Are portions of one power, which is mine.

## V

I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,

Then with unwilling steps I wander down

Into the clouds of the Atlantic even ;

For grief that I depart they weep and frown :

What look is more delightful than the smile

With which I soothe them from the western isle ?

## VI

I am the eye with which the Universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself divine ;  
All harmony of instrument or verse,  
All prophecy, all medicine are mine,  
All light of art or nature ;—to my song,  
Victory and praise in their own right belong.

## HYMN OF PAN

## I

FROM the forests and highlands  
We come, we come ;  
From the river-girt islands,  
Where loud waves are dumb  
Listening to my sweet pipings.  
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,  
The bees on the bells of thyme,  
The birds on the myrtle bushes,  
The cicale above in the lime,  
And the lizards below in the grass,  
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,  
Listening to my sweet pipings.

## II

Liquid Peneus was flowing,  
And all dark Tempe lay  
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing  
The light of the dying day,  
Speeded by my sweet pipings.  
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,  
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,  
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,  
And the brink of the dewy caves,  
And all that did then attend and follow  
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,  
With envy of my sweet pipings.

## III

I sang of the dancing stars,  
 I sang of the dædal Earth,  
 And of Heaven—and the giant wars,  
 And Love, and Death, and Birth,—  
 And then I changed my pipings,—  
 Singing how down the vale of Menalus  
 I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed :  
 Gods and men, we are all deluded thus !  
 It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed :  
 All wept, as I think both ye now would,  
 If envy or age had not frozen your blood,  
 At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

## TO THE MOON

## I

ART thou pale for weariness  
 Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,  
 Wandering companionless  
 Among the stars that have a different birth,—  
 And ever changing, like a joyless eye  
 That finds no object worth its constancy ?

## II

Thou chosen sister of the spirit,  
 That gazes on thee till in thee it pities . . .

## SONG OF PROSERPINE,

WHILE GATHERING FLOWERS ON THE PLAIN OF ENNA

## I

SACRED Goddess, Mother Earth,  
 Thou from whose immortal bosom

Gods and men and beasts have birth,  
    Leaf and blade and bud and blossom,  
Breathe thine influence most divine  
On thine own child, Proserpine.

## II

If with mists of evening dew  
    Thou dost nourish these young flowers  
Till they grow, in scent and hue,  
    Fairest children of the hours,  
Breathe thine influence most divine  
On thine own child, Proserpine.

## SONNETS

## POLITICAL GREATNESS

NOR happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,  
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,  
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame ;  
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,  
History is but the shadow of their shame,  
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts  
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,  
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery  
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit  
By force or custom ? Man who man would be,  
Must rule the empire of himself ; in it  
Must be supreme, establishing his throne  
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy  
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

## LINES TO A REVIEWER

ALAS, good friend, what profit can you see  
In hating such a hateless thing as me ?  
There is no sport in hate when all the rage  
Is on one side : in vain would you assuage  
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,  
In which not even contempt lurks to beguile  
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.  
O, conquer what you cannot satiate ;  
For to your passion I am far more coy  
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy  
In winter noon. Of your antipathy,  
If I am the Narcissus, you are free  
To pine into a sound with hating me.

## TO BYRON

[I AM afraid these verses will not please you, but]  
If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill  
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair  
The ministration of the thoughts that fill  
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share  
A portion of the unapproachable,  
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair  
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.  
But such is my regard that nor your power  
To soar above the heights where others [climb],  
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour  
Cast from the envious future on the time,  
Move one regret for his unhonoured name  
Who dares these words :—the worm beneath the sod  
May lift itself in homage of the God.

## OZYMANDIAS

I MET a traveller from an antique land  
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, (stamped on these lifeless things,)  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed :  
And on the pedestal these words appear :  
“ My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair ! ”  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

THE END